

RODENHURST

OR THE
MILLIONAIRE AND THE HUNCHBACK

BY MISS E. M. STEWART



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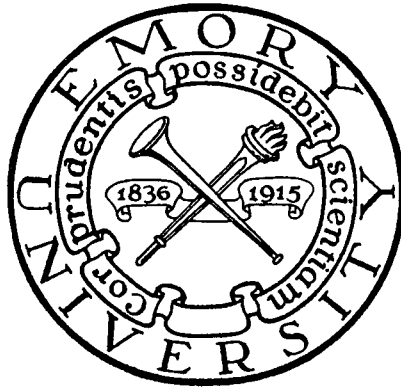
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RODENHURST:

OR,

THE MILLIONAIRE AND THE HUNCHBACK.

BY

MISS E. M. STEWART,

AUTHORESS OF "THE ROYALISTS AND ROUNDHEADS," "AUBREY CONYERS,"

"LILLIAS DAVENANT," "RIVAL ROSES," "LORD DACRE OF GILSLAND,"

"HERMIONE, OR THE FATALIST," "LONDON CITY TALES,"

"GITHA OF THE FOREST," "GOLDEN CLASP,"

ETC. ETC.

"'Gainst form and order they their power employ,
Nothing to build, and all things to destroy;
But far more numerous is the herd of such,
Who think too little, and who talk too much:
These by the same blind benefit of fate,
Alike *old Satan* and *High Churchman* hate."

DRYDEN.

LONDON:

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1867.

RODENHURST.

CHAPTER I.

What man dare, I dare ;
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger,
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble.

MACBETH.

THE grey, cold dawn of a cloudless morning in the month of March was beginning to creep across the east, while the stars glimmered through the thin air, and the slowly waning moonbeams, which had lighted up the long winter night, still played faintly over the chill landscape, throwing into bold relief the swelling breast of many a hill, and the gaunt leafless forms of the trees that waved upon its sides and summit. Beheld by the glowing light of a summer sun, the spot alluded to was as fair as any in the fair county of Stafford. Then the stream, which now held a darkling silent course among the brushwood that fringed the base of the hill, leaped and sang merrily on its pebbly bed ; and pleasant to the foot of the tired wayfarer was the carpet of turf that was spread over the gently undulating ground, and the shade of the oak coppice which stretched far from the brow of the boldest hill into the open country, mingling occasionally with the spreading beech and the tall elm. But the land of dreary winter yet rested on the scene—cold, and solitary, and silent, it lay in the white moonbeam, and the slowly

strengthening dawn ; while the muffled figures of some travellers, who now appeared descending the boldest of the surrounding hills, took but little from its cheerlessness. The party consisted of a man, who rode a strongly built iron-grey horse, and two females, one of whom rode on a pillion behind him, while the other was mounted on a stout hack, amid a heap of packages.

To judge from appearances, their condition might have been that of respectable townspeople, or country gentry of the lower class ; shrouded even in their riding cloaks, the figures of the man and the female, who rode by herself, showed the bulk and firm build of middle age ; while the slightness of the form, wrapped in a scarlet cardinal, which rested on the pillion, betrayed the delicacy and fragility of youth. Of the features of these travellers, however, no judgment could be formed ; for the man wore his riding hat slouched over his eyes, and the hoods of the females were drawn closely round their faces.

Now they paused at the foot of the hill, and a few words of doubt as to the road which they ought to take were pronounced by the man in a clear, but somewhat harsh voice ; while at the same time he pushed back his hat, and anxiously scanned the surrounding landscape. In the gathering light of the morning, far away to the right, over the wild moor and the fertile meadow, he saw darkly defined upon the sky some of those tall clumps of stately trees which still in our isle betoken the near dwelling of the rich and powerful. Amid the leafless branches, the keen-eyed traveller fancied that he could detect the walls of a mansion. But, as his glance ranged to the left of those clumps of trees, at about the distance of a mile he plainly discovered, on the yet more lofty brow of a hill, a huge building, the abode of some person of more wealth than taste ; of the latter, very little was discoverable, even in the site that was chosen for this mansion, which seemed to thrust itself upon the observation of the surrounding country, without a tree to shelter it either from the winter winds or the summer heats. It would indeed almost have appeared as though the possessor of

that mansion had designed a surveillance of the proceedings of his neighbours; for far below its grounds stretched away in park-like beauty, and the walls of many a summer house and fanciful pavilion might be seen amid the leafless trees.

In a valley, too, that sloped gently between these proud dwellings, lay embosomed a village, which feature by feature was slowly developed as the morning mist drew upwards. Most prominent was the ivy-hung tower of the ancient church, and the whitewashed walls of the cottages, glancing through the dark and naked boughs of the trees in their surrounding gardens. Far over the open country that lay between that village and our travellers were now borne on the cold morning air the various sounds of life, the opening casement, the shrill barking of the dogs, mingled occasionally with the still shriller voices of the children. Loud above these sounds, however, was now heard the distant winding of the huntsman's horn; and our travellers, turning their eyes towards the open land which intervened between them and the more imposing of the two mansions, beheld two figures on horseback hastening at full speed, as it seemed in the direction whence came the sound of the chase.

"What say you, Dame Alice?" said the male traveller, turning towards her who appeared the elder of his female companions; "know you the features of this country, or can you form a guess how far we now are from the abode of Mr. Harry Draycot?"

"Aye, good father," said the female, in reply to the question which had been addressed to her, "twenty long years have not erased from my memory this dear spot; yonder, if my eyes deceive me not, should be Draycot vale; taking our way through the copse, half an hour's riding will bring us to the village; that dwelling seen through the trees is Draycot Manor. Alas," she continued, while her voice sank into a sorrowful tone, "how many times have I roamed with sweet Mistress Emma Frankley through the shade of those dark woods! and, dreary as they now seem, the spring shall soon give back their

beauty ; but how many a spring has the grass grown green on Emma Frankley's breast !”

“ A truce, dear and faithful friend, to these sad reflections !” said the other female, and, leaning forward, she put back her hood, and discovered the beautiful face of a girl of nineteen : “ think you that mournful thoughts crowd not upon me, in approaching that spot where my mother knew the few happy months that chequered her short, but sorrowful existence ! Oh, my second mother ! you must now be all yourself ; or your poor Sybil, when she appears a nameless, portionless wanderer, pleading for the pity and assistance of those to whom she at least is a stranger, will perchance forget your noble lessons, and sink beneath the pressure of her evil fate.”

“ The child speaks truly !” said the male traveller. “ Be- think thee, Alice, though this Mr. Draycot be a gentleman of fair repute, and loved the mother of our Sybil well, the child knows him not as thou dost ; and I marvel not that her gentle heart sinks at a new encounter with a stranger, seeing how often she has pleaded in vain to the noble and wealthy, of her own kin and faith, that they would interfere in behalf of her fortunes, and her mother's fame.”

“ Oh, Father Lawson !” replied Alice, with a sort of enthusiasm in her voice, “ but not in vain, I will pledge my life, will be her appeal to the brave and kind-hearted Harry Draycot. Thou knowest, father, this journey had been undertaken a year ago, hadst thou not been obstinate in thy resolve first to attempt to interest in the child's behalf those of her own faith. How much time has been lost by that resolve !”

“ Not so, Dame Alice,” answered Father Lawson sharply ; “ it was well to discover Sybil's exact position ; it behoved us to be cautious in whose hands we placed her fate ; it is very grievous to find that the spirit of an honourable resistance to injustice has in this land well nigh departed from the children of the true faith ; but from their meanness even may we learn the extent of the oppression which they have suffered. But enough of this : do thou, good dame, guide us towards Draycot

vale; we will rest in the hamlet, and it may be that we shall there learn at what time we may best obtain speech with the Squire."

"An admirable plan, dear father," said Sybil, "and one which I do hope will yield me grace for a day; for I am free to own to thee that my poor heart recoils, as the time approaches in which I must again appear as a petitioner."

"I fear me much, fair daughter," replied Lawson, with an affected air of rebuke, and while a slight smile played for a moment upon his lip, "that the pride of the Mandeville has near as much to do with these terrors as the timidity of the maid."

While Lawson spoke thus, he rode with his companions along a tract of moorland, that faced the hills over which they had passed; to the left, this moorland had been reclaimed, and it stretched away in fields with trim hedges, beyond which was seen the hill where stood the modern built mansion. Towards that mansion Sybil now happened to turn her eyes. "And knowest thou to whom belongs yon gallant abode, dear Alice?" she said.

"No, in truth, my child," replied Alice. "In the time when I remember, yon hill was hung with a coppice like even to that which we are approaching. Ah," she said, with an accent of ill-will, "it belongs no doubt to some creature of this modern time, one of the many whose drachmas are coined from the blood of the poor man."

While thus our travellers spoke, the sound of the huntsman's horn had been heard at intervals dying away in the distance, as though the chase had diverged far from the road which they were pursuing; at that moment, too, came close to them the sharp clatter of the hoofs of other horses than their own, and two men rode up, the foremost eagerly demanding if they had seen or knew aught of the chase.

The person who made this inquiry was a man who, to judge by the deep lines in his countenance, had turned his sixtieth year; he was mounted on a beautiful bay horse, and his coat, of the finest grey cloth lined with scarlet silk, was richly laced.

As far as could be judged by his appearance on horseback, the figure of this gentleman somewhat exceeded the middle standard; while the bulk of his frame seemed rather that of bone and sinew, than of flesh. On examining his features, a critic must have acknowledged that their outline was handsome; but so hard and disagreeable was the face taken as a whole, that there were few who after the first glance did not shrink from its possessor with an indefinable feeling of abhorrence and dread, while none could bear to contemplate it long. The compressed lips, the rigid muscles round them, seemed wrought in iron; there was something indescribably repulsive in the glance of the deep-set grey eye, so cold and unfeeling, but withal so keenly penetrating, and so fierce; while even the short crisp and but slightly grizzled curls of his black hair, which, contrary to the fashion of the time, he wore clustering over his furrowed brow, and the unpleasantly dark streaks of colour in his cheek, while they gave promise of robust health in their possessor, seemed but to stamp more firmly on his countenance the stern, inflexible character of the man.

The companion of this person was one who wore the clerical habit of the day, and who was no otherwise remarkable than for a certain rotundity of person, a florid face, and a small black eye, the restless rolling of which was thought by many to be most sorely at variance with the prim puritanical pursing of the mouth: this rolling eye, be it observed, lighted so curiously on the person of Sybil, as its owner rode up to her, that with a feeling of wounded modesty she involuntarily drew her hood closer over her face.

This person, however, seemed as though he had determined that he would make acquaintances of our party in spite of themselves; for, on Lawson simply answering to the question which had been addressed to him respecting the chase, "That he and his companions were but simple travellers on the road, and strangers to the neighbourhood," he compelled his sleek pony to mend its ambling pace, and broke in with the salutations of the morning, and a recommendation to the travellers to seek rest and refreshment in the village of Draycot.

"Thanks, Sir," replied Lawson, "for your courteous advice ; it is even to that village that we are bound."

These words were drily uttered, and designed by the speaker to close the conversation, for Lawson liked not the free and easy air of the stranger. The latter, however, was not so soon abashed ; and the rude morning wind, at that moment throwing back the close folds of Sybil's hood, fully revealed her face to his bold gaze : he did not withdraw his eyes till she had rearranged the covering ; then, bowing to Lawson, he said, in a tone which had a slight twang of the conventicle :—

"Verily, friend, thou hast a fair daughter, like even to the rose of Sharon, beautiful as the lily of the valley : thou wilt be wise even to make thine abode in the pleasant solitudes of Draycot ; of a truth, my friend, the village is a safer dwelling for a beauteous maiden than the busy town ; for the city is the abode of corruption, and many a snare is there spread for the foot of the unwary ; let us hope, then, that thy sojourning with the fair maiden at Draycot will be long."

"Our stay, good Sir," replied Lawson, "depends upon the will of others rather than on our own ; but in hamlet, or in town, my ward, while I live, will want neither a friend to give her such counsel as one long experienced in the deceits of the world may be qualified to bestow, nor the protection of an arm not yet weakened by advancing age."

The tone, it might be, of the latter portion of this speech was not perhaps altogether agreeable to the person to whom it was addressed ; for he raised his eyes to the face of the speaker, and, restless and rolling as was in general their glance, they now assumed a keenness of penetration which would not have disgraced those of his companion, who, after his question to Lawson, rode a little in advance. The divining look of the stranger was met by Lawson with a calmness that defied it : the face of the latter was somewhat thin, and remarkably pale ; the nose was aquiline, the eyes dark blue, the countenance as a whole was passionless and cold ; while the deep lines on the broad massive brow, and even the powdered wig, contributed to be-

stow on it something of a venerable air, not exactly warranted by his age, which could not have much exceeded fifty years. Brief as was the gaze which Lawson and his questioner fixed upon each other, there was a something in the steady look, in the recollected, thoughtful air with which they mutually withdrew their eyes, that might to an intelligent observer have spoken more eloquently than words of the knowledge which those men had obtained, each of the character of the other.

An air of caution, and even of respect, now diffused itself over the manner of the stranger, mixed with an expression of eager curiosity : he approached more closely to Lawson, and said, politely, "Should thy sojourn at Draycot vale, good Sir, exceed the limits of the week, doubtless I shall see thee with thy fair ward at church on the Sabbath day ; but should it suit thy pleasure, or convenience, before that time to inquire at the rectory for its occupant, Dr. Croxall, I will undertake to ensure thee a hearty welcome."

A slight start on the part of Lawson was sufficiently perceptible at these words, and the colour of his pale face was for a moment heightened ; but, quickly recovering his self-possession, he bowed in his cold manner, and inquired whether it was not to Dr. Croxall he had at that moment the honour of speaking.

"Nay!" returned Croxall, "the honour is rather mine ; for either my memory is sorely at fault, or I have the rare pleasure of again conversing with mine old friend, the learned and respectable Robert Lawson."

Lawson smiled slightly, and answered, "I confess, Reverend Sir, that my memory is less tenacious than yours ; for, old as is our acquaintanceship, I had not remembered you but by the mention of your name."

"Well, it may be, friend Lawson," replied Croxall, "that my aspect is more altered than thine own, for thou knowest that the duties of my sacred calling are in these days full arduous to perform, and I may well be changed ; but thou, if report lieth not, my friend"—and as Croxall spoke these words he again fixed a keen look upon Lawson—"thou hast passed thy happy life

in philosophic and religious leisure, dwelling for years upon the Tiber's banks, and there evoking the shadows of more than one ancient superstition."

"There," answered Lawson, coolly, "you have been in some measure misinformed: it is true that after our parting I spent a year or two in Italy, but an humble cottage in the mountains of Wales has been for many years past my chief residence."

"Nay," replied Croxall, with an air of deprecation, "I seek not, dear friend, to sift into thy affairs; enough for me it is that we have met again; and, if thou art as much enamoured of the past as thou wast of yore, right glad shall I be to resume our amicable disputations."

Such reply as Lawson might have made to this speech was drowned in a loud blast of the huntsman's horn, ringing apparently on the opposite side of the copse to which our party were now very nearly approaching.

At that sound the companion of Croxall hastily reined in his horse, and, turning to the rector, shouted, while the dark blood grew darker on his cheek—"Spur up the hill, Croxall; they come—they come: now shall we see if rumour speaks rightly of their rebel sport!"

"Ay, Sir Andrew Luntley!" humbly replied Croxall, "the hill without doubt; but, if the fox takes to the hill, let us have a care that we are not run down by these crazed huntsmen. I would wager a year's tithes that the wild Harry Draycot or my young Lord Fitzwarine would think the sport greatly amended, could they but turn either thee or myself into the mire."

While Lawson and his companions, together with Sir Andrew and the rector, rode up the hill, the wood through which they had been about to pass rung again and again with the echoes of the chase, the baying of dogs, the trampling of horses, and mingled with the occasional winding of the horn, came loudly upon the ears of our travellers loud shouts and extravagant bursts of laughter.

Meantime, the person whom Croxall had addressed as Sir Andrew Luntley evinced a degree of irritation and anxiety respect-

ing this chase, far beyond what the occasion seemed to demand: the dark colour still flushed his face, he drew his breath hard, and gazed eagerly towards the wood from which it might be momentarily expected that the chase would issue. His own agitation, indeed, could alone have hindered his observing that of Alice, who as they rode up the hill had obtained a full view of his features: at the moment when his name was pronounced by Croxall, she had started, and put up her hand to draw her hood closer over her face; but now, as if its folds were oppressive, she put it back, and turning her head from Sir Andrew, to whose side Croxall had ridden, she gasped heavily for breath. The marble hue of her countenance was observed both by Sybil and Lawson, and the latter spurred his horse to her side.

"Courage, Alice, courage!" muttered Lawson, with some sternness in his looks and manner.

"Be of good heart, dear Alice!" exclaimed Sybil in a gentler tone; "see you, my spirits do not fail; then fear you not; the kind Heaven will yet bear us through these most evil meetings."

What else Sybil might have said was interrupted by the renewed clamour in the wood; nor, young and light-hearted as she was, even amid her many misfortunes, could she forbear joining in the merriment of the hunters, when she perceived issuing from the cover, with the dogs hard upon his heels, a fox, fantastically arrayed in a jacket of scarlet cloth, while the hounds, his pursuers, were attired in vests of the tartan plaid, at that period in bad repute. Close after the hounds came the troop of merry hunters, sweeping from the wide centre path of the copse over the open ground beyond: instead, too, of the usual scarlet costume of the English sportsmen, the gentlemen of this party wore coats of the old Lincoln green, with each a scarf of tartan silk, passed in the Highland fashion across his shoulder, and a Highland bonnet on his head.

At a furious rate the soldier-clad fox took his way over the moorland, and no less furiously did the dogs, horses, and men, bear after him, the customary tumult of a chase still mingling

with bursts of satirical laughter. The moment, however, that the fox had sprung from the covert, Sir Andrew Luntley had turned sharply upon Croxall, exclaiming—

“Now then, most reverend and learned Doctor, seest thou the village report has not exaggerated the audacity of the worthy squire and his noble friends? Think you that I will wink at such proceedings!”

“Truly!” answered Croxall, with a laugh, “I see nothing in this affair, good Sir Andrew, which merits a display of thy indignation—let it pass, let it pass; can it irk the Illustrious House of Hanover that a few harebrained youths in the county of Stafford indulge in a Jacobite vagary? Sir Andrew, leave them to these amusements, which are shadows—the substantial are our own!”

“They shall see!” cried Sir Andrew, as he spurred his horse towards the hunters—“they shall know I have witnessed their treasonable sport: I will ruin Harry Draycot yet!”

“Now, for Heaven’s sake, Sir Andrew,” exclaimed Croxall, “beware what you do; the Earl of Aumerle himself may be of this party.”

“Earl or Duke, Sir, I care not!” replied Luntley; “let Aumerle look well even to his own coronet.”

With these words Sir Andrew took off his hat; and, while the fox and the hounds scoured the base of the hill, loudly hailed the hunters. It happened, however, that the spirited animal which Sir Andrew rode was startled, both by the noise and the sudden impetus which he had received from his rider’s spur, and became restive; but, heedless even of this, Sir Andrew, borne away by the passion of the moment, still urged on the creature, till it came directly across the path of one of the younger sportsmen, who was among the last in the chase.

“Fair sport to you, Master Harry!” cried Luntley, in a sneering tone. The huntsman’s horse, so suddenly checked in its headlong course by that of Luntley, backed and reared so violently, that nothing but consummate skill on the part of its rider enabled him to keep his seat; irritated, however, both

by the insolence of the interruption, and by perceiving his fellow-sportsmen far outstripping him in the chase, the youth raised a small riding whip which he carried in his hand, and, while his own curvetting steed brought him nearer to that of Luntley, struck the baronet a smart blow across the face. An exclamation more earnest than pious broke from the lips of Sir Andrew, who, in a transport of passion, leaned forward, and endeavoured to seize the young sportsman by the collar; but the latter at the same moment giving the rein to his steed, it darted after the chase, which was now sweeping along to the boundaries of the moor; while Sir Andrew, losing in his own impetuous movement all power over his restive horse, was precipitated from his saddle; and, his head striking in his fall against the root of a decaying thorn, he lay stunned, and motionless, his horse galloping at its own discretion through the copse. The rector meanwhile had, on his part, taken especial care to keep himself safely ensconced on the descent of the hill, so soon as he perceived which course the fox had taken; nay, he had even joined in Sybil's merry laugh on the first appearance of the strangely-accounted animal; and now, with a coolness truly philosophical, he turned his head in the direction which the fox had pursued, and in which the train of the chase was fast beginning to disappear. Then he smacked his lips as an epicure might have done over a favourite dish, muttering at the same time something about a gallant chase, mixed with regrets that he could not himself partake in it—"and either," he muttered, in conclusion, "that vexatious dimness which has so often come over mine eyes of late hath crossed them even now, or Reynard takes the right-hand road, which, after a goodly run, will bring them to the village. I'faith the sport will be bravely crowned if they run the rascal down there!"

Having uttered these words, Croxall slowly rode his pony after Lawson, who, so soon as he perceived the accident which had befallen Sir Andrew, had hastened to give him assistance; this office of humanity indeed he performed with so much ex-

pedition, that when the burly rector reached the side of his friend, he found Lawson and Sybil already dismounted; the former supporting the senseless Baronet in his arms, while the latter endeavoured to staunch with her handkerchief the blood which flowed freely from a wound which a sharp pebble had inflicted on his brow.

"Did ever a wise man commit before so silly an action as this?" cried Croxall, while he leisurely dismounted, and stood with his hands thrust in his pockets, contemplating the endeavours of Sybil and Lawson to assist Sir Andrew. "Certainly," he continued, "there is an undue irritability in the temperament of mine excellent friend Sir Andrew, which, as I have often told him, sorely mars the cool calculation of his wisdom, that he could not now brush a wasp from his path without subjecting himself to its sting—that he should provoke a stroke from a whip in the hand of a rattle-brained boy."

Lawson now requested the rector to assist Sybil in supporting Sir Andrew, and also begged to know if he was aware of any spring in the neighbourhood. "I pray you, Dr. Croxall," said the humane Lawson, "do not delay: I have, as you know, some slight knowledge of surgery, and it appears to me that your friend has received a somewhat dangerous contusion."

"Which, assuredly," replied Croxall, petulantly, "is no more than the due reward of my friend's folly; wherefore must he meddle with hot-blooded boys, or thrust himself on the path of Lord Aumerle? Now do I most devoutly hope that he may be confined to his bed, for at least a fortnight, so shall he be for so long a space kept free of those sublime-spirited Tories, and addle-brained Jacobites, who are to feast in the house of our patriotic Squire of Draycot."

"But the brook, my friend," said Lawson, interrupting the splenetic rector; "is there no brook in this neighbourhood?"

"I do think, Sir," said Alice, who had now approached the wounded man, "that about a hundred yards to the left of the wood you will find, unless it has been turned from its course, a considerable stream; such an one I know there was some years

ago, the current of which turned the wheels of a mill not far from hence."

"Well thought of!" cried Croxall; "there is indeed on that verge of the wood which you name such a stream, though for the mill, that has been long ago removed, for it interfered with some of Sir Andrew's new plantations. But you, Madam," he continued, while Lawson went in search of the water, "you are, it would seem, no stranger to our neighbourhood."

"It is many years, Sir," answered Alice, "since I have seen the village of Draycot."

Lawson had by this time returned with some water in his hat, and, while he bathed with it the temples of Sir Andrew, Alice, again covering her face with her riding hood, drew a little on one side.

The coldness of the water soon revived the insensible Baronet, and, on opening his eyes, they first wandered with a glassy unconscious stare over the persons of Croxall and Lawson, who were leaning over him, and finally rested upon the features of Sybil, who, with her hood thrown back, and her hands clasped upon her bosom, stood silently near his feet.

The form and face of the young maiden were of that order, upon which the human eye in general delights to rest. Rich tresses of hair, the colour of which varied in different lights, from the brightest auburn to a deep chestnut, were partially wreathed back from a brow which broke in full Grecian beauty from among their dark masses; the other features were small and delicate, the shape of the face a fine oval, the complexion most transparently fair, its dazzling whiteness heightened by its contrast to the truly Oriental eyes, which, large, black, and dreamy, but with fire lurking in their depths, seemed literally to swim beneath the long silken lashes, the colour of which might have emulated that of the raven's wing. Looking at the full face, a cursory observer might have said that the nose was straight, but, taken in profile, it was just sufficiently aquiline to increase a certain air of decision, which a captious critic might have urged as a fault in so young a face. Such an one might also

have said that the brow, in its towering majesty, was too massive for the other features ; that the red rose tint upon the cheek was perhaps a thought too pale ; that the finely cut lips closed at times with too firm a purpose ; and that, as a whole, the character of the countenance was too much at variance with the childish slightness of the figure. Most sweet, however, had the face of Sybil been in general esteemed ; nor could the most sour critic have discovered in it a cause for the growing conscious horror of Sir Andrew's gaze, as, rising from the arms of his supporters, he fixed his eyes, as if under the influence of some strange fascination, upon the face of the young girl.

Sybil, on her part, involuntarily shrunk back, for a ghastly aspect was that of Sir Andrew ; a dark line of blood slowly stealing down his cheek, blanched by an apparent terror to the hideous pallor of a corpse ; a light of frenzy in his deep grey eyes, and a black circle gathering beneath them. The iron frame of the strong man shook, and his breast heaved as though he laboured with the nightmare : he strove to speak, and the words seemed stifled in his throat ; then, with a hollow laugh, he suddenly leaned forward, and grasped the hand of Sybil, dragging the terrified girl to her knees, as he sunk backwards in convulsions.

CHAPTER II.

The eager pack from couples freed
Dash through the bush, the brier, the brake ;
And answering hound, and horn, and steed
The mountain echoes startling wake.

THE WILDGRAVE.

MERRILY meanwhile went the chase, merrily rang the horn over the breezy hill, and in the deep valley, and through the leafless arches of the wood. On, on went the fox, tearing in his agony through the prickly brake, scaling the steep hill, or skimming over the smooth meadow land ; and on went the

fleet coursers and the fleeter hounds, hard upon the traces of their wretched prey—these, urged by their daring riders, leaping the wide chasm, or the barrier gates, those breaking their way through the long grass, and prickly furze. On, on in the madness of motion, earth and sky mingling in one strange confusion, the tall trees dancing to the flying clouds, the keen air, as they rushed through its currents, making strange tumults in the riders' ears.

The short-lived sun of the season threw a ruddy glow over the scene, glancing among the leafless boughs, as, bearing past the domain of Sir Andrew Luntley, the fox took a course leading straight into the village of Draycot: a wide circuit had he taken, ere he had borne, as Croxall had surmised in the outset of the chase he might do, towards the village.

The main body of the hunters had been often broken in the chase; and thus it was that two youths, as they caught afar off the sound of the horn in the direction of the village, urged their tired horses into a lane which but just admitted of their riding abreast, and which made a near way to Draycot. One of these young men was the son of the Squire, that Mr. Harry Draycot, who, to the Baronet's own discomfiture, had been so rudely accosted by Sir Andrew Luntley.

The age of this gentleman could scarcely have exceeded two and twenty years; his features were rather intelligent than handsome, his form inclined to the athletic; and his complexion, had it not been amended by a brown tint caught from the constant pursuit of field sports, might perhaps have been charged with too much of feminine fairness. His costume, which, from its extremely nice arrangement, had been scarce ruffled even by the boisterous morning's sport, betrayed him to be something of the fop of the day; his waistcoat was curiously embroidered with roses of white silk; and the keenness of the morning wind, even, had been insufficient to blow its profusion of powder out of his trim periwig.

A perfect contrast to the gay, dashing Mr. Harry Draycot, did the person of his companion present. Judging from his

appearance on horseback, his figure did not exceed the middle height, and, but for an unusual air of elegance and dignity, it might have been called too slight. His age was perhaps some three or four years more advanced than that of young Draycot, though the grave, and even severe expression of his fine features, it might be, detracted from their youth. Like Sir Andrew Luntley, in defiance of the mode of the day he wore his own hair—not, however, like the short grizzled curls of the Baronet clustering over his forehead, the hair of this gentleman parted in the middle of a bold and thoughtful brow, and fell over his shoulders in long glossy ringlets of the darkest chestnut colour, much in the fashion of a cavalier of the reign of Charles the First. The whole face, indeed, bore no very distant resemblance to the pictures of that martyred monarch; and perhaps in the arrangement of the long hair, and the short moustache, there was something of an excusable and elegant affectation; the complexion was of a clear but deep olive, nor did the exceeding lustre of the large dark eyes correct the melancholy of the countenance, save when they sparkled in unison with the most fascinating smile that ever adorned a face.

An air of plain richness distinguished the attire of this gentleman; and, as he rode with his companion down the lane, the expression of thought most common to his features, and which had been partially banished by the boisterous sport of the morning, again returned to them. This abstracted manner was presently noticed by his gay companion, who exclaimed, with a laugh: “A truce now, Fitzwarine, to thy grave and philosophical reflections for the passing hour, at the least. By the bye, my Lord, art thou aware that the bragging Baronet, Sir Andrew Luntley, dared cross my path this morning, when first we broke over Draycot moor?”

“Nay, I knew not so much,” replied Lord Fitzwarine; “for you know, Harry, that at our outset I led the chase.”

“Oh!” returned Draycot, laughing, “I would, though, thou hadst been at my side; I would thou hadst seen how I taught this thing of usury and city vileness to know his place. I would

desire no better revenge for his insolent assumptions than to scourge him through the village with strokes as smart as that he felt this morning."

"Have you struck Sir Andrew Luntley, Harry Draycot?" inquired Lord Fitzwarine. "Look, then, to your life; for well am I assured that he is a bold, no less than a bad man. Who knows not that the first gold he ever gained was tarnished by the blood of one whom his frauds had driven to self-destruction! Who knows not, too, that his spirit of revenge is as deadly as his love of gain is fierce? I condemn you not, Harry, for that which you have done; but I pray you look well to the end!"

Young Draycot laughed again. "Why, let him challenge me: I will warrant him less of a swordsman than a usurer!"

"There, even, I believe you are in error, Harry," answered Lord Fitzwarine. "Report in London, where you know he has mostly resided, speaks this Sir Andrew well skilled in all manly accomplishments. But there is, I will say, no hope of a challenge from him; no, on all occasions he prefers to serve his malice with the slow and griping torments of the law. Be assured that, however deserving of your hatred, this Luntley is less an object of contempt than you imagine."

This conversation passed in snatches, as Lord Fitzwarine and his friend rode at full speed down the lane—the shrill blast of the horn bursting upon them at intervals, as the wind bore its notes over the open country beyond the lane. A sweet spot in summer was this lane, with its hedgerows of the sweet-scented thorn, and brier rose, and here and there an elm springing up, while through the breaks between those tall trees might be caught by turns a glimpse of the old Manor House of Draycot, or the more modern and ostentatious mansion of Sir Andrew Luntley. In their present hurried course down the lane, however, the aspect of the surrounding country was unnoticed either by Lord Fitzwarine or his friend: and as they neared the end of it young Draycot exclaimed, with another of his merry laughs—"In good faith, Fitzwarine, I wish thou hadst been witness to the rage of Sir Andrew, as he looked upon our gaily clad

Reynard ; I would we might hunt the canting Whig himself, as becomingly attired !”

At that moment came another blast from the horn, and Draycot, urging on his horse, passed his friend, at a bend of the lane, and, better acquainted with the localities of the village, was the first to regain the company of his fellow-sportsmen.

“ A most unhandsome trick is this on thy part, Master Harry,” said Lord Fitzwarine, as he found himself thus outstripped by his gay friend ; “ and it shall go hard yet, if thou gain’st the laugh for finishing the chase which I began.”

Sooner, however, than he expected, that abrupt turn in the lane brought Lord Fitzwarine to its conclusion ; then it was that a deafening clamour from the village met his ears. At the end of the lane, the ground sloped gently for about a furlong towards the village green ; ere reaching which, Lord Fitzwarine caught sight of some of his companions in the chase ; and from some boys who were scampering full of glee over the green, he learned that the fox had taken refuge in the great barn belonging to Farmer Ashley at the end of the village. Thither accordingly Lord Fitzwarine hastened, and arrived there, just as the fox, roused from his last hiding place, and surrounded by the baying hounds, sank, their helpless prize, in the broad meadow at the corner of which stood Farmer Ashley’s barn.

To describe the noise and confusion of the scene would be impossible, the whole village was in a tumult ; the urchins in the school, who had seen the chase pass by, and were thoroughly transported by the gay costume of the fox, and the hounds, broke loose in spite of the threats of their master, and, flying up the village, were fairly in at the death. Nay, even the pedagogue himself, smitten with curiosity respecting this wonderful fox hunt, after sneering at his door for a few minutes at the bachelors and married men, maids, wives, and widows, who went chasing each other up the village as hard as ever the hounds had chased the fox, at last gulped down his dignity, and with his black gown streaming in the wind, and his wig turned hind-

part before, by the indecorous jostling of the villagers, was fain to put his best foot foremost in the pursuit.

Among the crowd of gallant looking gentlemen assembled round the slain fox was one tall and bulky person, in whose frank countenance and blue eyes those acquainted with his son would have been at no loss to recognise the father of Harry Draycot; he had dismounted from his horse, and summoning a favourite hound, it came gambolling round his feet, and licking his extended hand. "So, boy, so!" cried the Squire, "thou hast run down the redcoated vagabond. Would," he continued, "thou couldst as easily come at the foxes on two legs, who prey upon the substance of poor old England."

"Would so indeed, good friend," said a tall and gentlemanly man, who stood by Mr. Draycot's side; "for, if the present pernicious system alter not, the fox upon four legs will cease to be feared by the peasant, for truly he will have nothing left that the varlet will care to steal!"

"And to such a pass things shall not come, if it is in the power of man to prevent it!" answered Mr. Draycot; then, turning to the assembled villagers, he bade those who willed to drink to the health of the noble Earl of Aumerle, follow him forthwith to Draycot Manor House; intimating at the same time that the Earl was the gentleman who stood beside him.

At this announcement, a cheer, louder if possible than that which had hailed the running down of the fox, rang through the air; for, though stigmatized by the ministerial party of the day as the most insolent of aristocrats, the Earl of Aumerle was the very idol of the people, wherever his real character was known.

The friend of Wyndham and of Shippen, the dauntless advocate for the true liberties of the people, abused as an aristocrat, Tory, and High Churchman; yet most dearly was the Earl beloved. And he, too, spoke of liberty; he, the friend of an almost despotic authority, both in Church and State; "what, forsooth," cried his political foes, "has he to do with that sacred name of *liberty*, which belongs of right only to our councils?" Well might the Earle of Aumerle have replied,

“Let us, before we quarrel about a word, learn if you and I do not apply to that same word a somewhat different meaning. By the ‘liberty of the people,’ I understand a substantial good; or of a state of things securing to them a sound policy, the results of which would be the promotion of industry and contentment.”

Nor were the theories and the practice of Lord Aumerle at variance with each other; those substantial liberties, those real benefits which he advocated for the labouring class in general, he took care to secure to his own tenantry. On his estates farms were held, and the cottagers were employed upon such terms as secured to each man a fair return for his labour; that return which enabled the industrious and deserving, after supplying the actual wants of his family, according to his station, to lay by something for comfort and peace of mind. This comfort and peace of mind, too, contributed in no slight measure to preserve the high tone of religion and morality which distinguished the happy tenantry of the Earl of Aumerle; for, let the hard moralist, surrounded with luxuries, declaim as he will at the vices of the very poor, were he doomed to the actual want of “daily bread,” really bread, without the innumerable dainties with which he is accustomed to accompany its use, in such a situation the rigid virtue of the moralist himself might, when weighed in the balance, be found wanting. The labouring classes must ever make the larger portion of the human race; and if we refuse a due reward for their labour, or permit them to be idle, and hungry, and unhappy, they will assuredly become irreligious and wicked; and from the wickedness of a vast class there is everything to apprehend.

But the old English Squire is to be shown in his glory, with well-fed serving men and merry guests about him; and we have to introduce his sister, Miss Mildred Draycot, the most amiable and intelligent of old maids; and the Earl’s daughter, too, Lady Anne, the sweet and gentle Lady Anne.

CHAPTER III.

Nought is there under heaven's wide hollownesse,
That moves more dear compassion of the mind,
Than beauty brought t' unworthy wretchednesse,
By envy's snares, or fortune's freaks unkind.

SPENSER.

THE hour was five in the afternoon of the day of the fox hunt, the place a large old parlour in the Manor House of Draycot ; in the room were a lady somewhat in the decline of life, and a girl who could scarce have numbered eighteen summers.

Whose acquaintance shall we first make ? Youth and beauty, so very tenacious and forward, with your smooth cheeks and rich abundant tresses, stand aside for once, and contemplate the best change for which you may hope ; turn not from the waning charms of Miss Mildred Draycot, but muse upon the chance that your decline may be far less graceful. That bend of the tall, elegant figure is in the neck, rather than the shoulders ; there is nothing unpleasant in the slight air of debility which it communicates ; it suits well, even with the tender beseeching look of the large blue eyes ; with the stripes of silver that shine among the dark auburn hair, which is braided so smoothly across the pale forehead ; with the most feminine and delicate beauty of feature, which age has rather chastened than destroyed.

The shadows of early evening were now beginning to fall over the large apartment in which Mildred sat ; and, pushing back the embroidery frame at which she could no longer see to work, she rose, and walked towards one of the curiously carved windows, against which her young companion leaned. As Miss Draycot moved, the long train of her dress, of peach-coloured brocade, sent forth that peculiar rustling sound which proceeds only from the folds of such silk as the ladies of her day were used to wear. That rustling of silk, by the bye, and

tapping of the high-heeled shoes, were unfailingly mentioned in the ghost stories which delighted our childhood. What an admirable figure for such a tale would Miss Mildred have made, as she glided across that large old room, with her pale face, and tall slight figure, spreading from the slender waist to the enormous circumference of the hoop; and her lappets, and apron, and ruffles, of the finest point lace; and her heavy bracelets, and necklace, and earrings, of wrought gold, set with large emeralds, which gleamed in the flashes of the enormous fire which blazed upon the ample hearth, dispelling the faint, sickly gloom of the dying daylight!

"Why so pensive, dear child?" inquired Mildred, laying her hand as she spoke upon the shoulder of the younger lady. The latter started, and turned suddenly at the sound of the voice; and at that moment a parting sunbeam, breaking from among the grey clouds that overhung the Manor House, shed a glow upon her delicate features. In person Lady Anne Fitzwarine bore no resemblance to her brother; in height she was somewhat below the middle size, gracefully, but slightly formed; her complexion was transparently fair, and most agreeably contrasted with her long flowing tresses, which, blacker than night, seemed to mock in their profusion the bandelets of pearl intended to confine them to the back of her head. There was the extremity of sweetness and prettiness in her features, but not that regular beauty which might have challenged a critical eye. Her dress was of white silk, garnished with knots of violet-coloured ribbon, the long stomacher displaying the grace of her figure, and the tight sleeve, descending only to the elbow, discovering the symmetry and whiteness of her arms and hands.

For modern notions, the apartment in which these ladies stood would have had a something of dreariness amid its evidence of wealth. It was floored and panelled with oak; and on those panels frowned the portraits of numerous grim worthies of the family of Draycot. Over the antique and curiously carved chimneypiece were suspended the antlers of many a gallant stag. The windows were lofty and numerous, and

broken into many lights, the oak mullions being richly carved; for this dwelling of the Draycots had been built in the reign of the first Tudor, and there was a fantastic, but somewhat heavy magnificence in its architecture. From the window near which the Lady Anne stood, the eye swept through fine shrubberies, and over undulating lawns, towards one of the side entrances to the park; the mists of a waning winter evening were now gathering there, but even through those mists Lady Anne descried three figures advancing.

Miss Draycot repeated her question. "To own to thee the truth, dear Madam," replied the young lady, "I was thinking of that which thy nephew, Master Harry, told us on his return from the chase, of his encounter with Sir Andrew Luntley; surely, if he be so bad a man as report speaks him, Mr. Draycot has done imprudently in giving what will to the world appear as a fair plea for his malice: such a character, it seemeth to my humble judgment, were better avoided than provoked."

"There is reason, dear child, in thy words," answered Miss Draycot; "and I could wish that my hot brother and his son were guided in their conduct towards the Baronet by such a reasonable fear as thine, rather than by the mere impulse of dislike, however just. When I consider how dangerous a weapon is the law, I apprehend that, in backing so many of the farmers and small gentry in their litigations with Sir Andrew, my imprudent brother only furthers the views of that most evil-minded man."

"Dear Lady!" answered Anne, with a certain air of alarm in her looks and voice, "you think not, I trust, that any serious ill can befall good Mr. Draycot at the hands of Sir Andrew?—Surely the gentry of England are not to be at the power of men sprung from the vilest classes among the people!"

"My gentle child," replied Miss Draycot, smiling, "the distinctions of blood and birth, if at any time they would have proved a defence against the harassing uncertainties of the law, are surely not so in these days, when money and ministerial influence too often strain its meanings to an absolute injustice.

But a truce, dear Lady Anne, to a conversation upon one so unworthy of your consideration as Sir Andrew. I trust thy noble father will persuade my brother into a more dignified, and less irritable, opposition to this tyrannical upstart; and for Harry, I do believe, sweet Lady Anne, a word of remonstrance from thy lips might almost beguile him into courteousness towards the whole race of Whigs, let alone this obnoxious Sir Andrew."

At these words of Miss Draycot, a blush perceivable even in the faint twilight mantled the cheek of Lady Anne; and, abruptly again turning towards the window, she pointed at the still advancing figures, and exclaimed—"Whom have we here, dear Madam? Some poor gentleman, or oppressed farmer, coming with his wife and daughter to appeal to your good brother against the tyranny of Sir Andrew. Alas! I fear their time is not well chosen; for I think, after the fatigues of the morning's chase, the Squire is fairly devoted to his bright claret for the evening; besides which, you know, he promised the villagers whom he invited that he would, with us, look in on their festivity."

While Lady Anne spoke, a sound of loud laughter from the dining room, in which sat Mr. Draycot and his guests, was faintly heard, even in the remote apartment to which his sister and Lady Anne had adjourned on leaving the table. Miss Draycot smiled as this sound of hilarity met her ears, and assented to the observation of Lady Anne, that the newcomers had chosen an ill time, if they would prefer a petition; then observing that she would ring for lights, and they would then repair to the drawing room, she turned from the window, whence Lady Anne continued to watch the strangers till, turning the angle of a shrubbery, they disappeared. In a few moments the door of the apartment opened, and an ancient servitor of the Draycot family appeared, followed by a younger attendant, bearing a couple of wax candles.

Miss Draycot having desired this man to precede herself and Lady Anne to the great drawing room, the elder servant respectfully approached with an air as if he would claim her

attention : the lady smiled—"What is it, good Bateman?" she said ; "I do guess now by the very glance of thine eye, that thou hast some petition to prefer ; is there some one taken ill in the village, or another cottager driven out by Sir Andrew, seeking to be admitted among the tenantry of my brother?"

"Neither, my Lady," replied Bateman ; "but, may it please you, a stranger gentleman, in company with two ladies, seeketh speech with the Squire : I told him that dinner was but just over, and that my master, occupied with many esteemed guests, would like not to be disturbed to-night ; at this, she who seems the elder lady broke into regrets ; and, Madam, unless her voice and aspect deceive me much, that lady is one whom you would be well pleased to see, for assuredly she hath the speech' and favour of Alice Morland : and when her voice confirmed this thought, which her face, though altered, first led me conceive, then, Mistress Mildred, I made so bold, as to say that you would probably see this lady and her friends : for I know you have been in a sad uncertainty as to whether Alice Morland still lived ; and that my good master has long since forgotten his disagreement with Mr. Gerald Mandeville."

At these words of the old man, something more of emotion than the placid Mildred Draycot usually evinced appeared in her countenance ; and, with considerable perturbation, she said, "Indeed, thou hast done most rightly, good Bateman : dear to my heart were those to whose fortunes Alice Morland was allied ; it may be that she comes to disperse the mystery which overhangs their fate : and truly didst thou surmise that the friendship of his early youth has long been the only feeling with which my brother has thought of the departed heir of Rodenhurst. Haste then, good Bateman—if it be Alice Morland who has at last come hither, oh, bring her to me at once!"

While the old man hastened to obey her commands, Miss Draycot paced the apartment with a hurried step, tears burst from her eyes, and, in a voice of much emotion, she exclaimed :—

"Dear friends!—gallant, noble Gerald—gentle Emma! the experience which years have now given to the world, of the man

who was your enemy, may well lead us to believe that your wrongs were great !”

Then, pausing suddenly in her hurried walk, Miss Draycot took the hand of Lady Anne ; and, with her customary quiet sweetness, said, “ Excuse, my dear young friend, this violent emotion ; the name which Bateman announced is linked in my heart with some of its saddest memories, with deep suffering which I knew had been endured by those whom to know was to esteem and love ; and the chief of whose sorrows we have but lately learned were caused by that man of evil deeds, Sir Andrew Luntley.”

“ Ah, dear Madam !” cried the sympathising Lady Anne, taking the hand of Miss Draycot, and fondly pressing it to her lips, “ the sorrows of the noble and true-hearted, wrought by the hand of Sir Andrew Luntley, and wept over by thee, cannot be heard of with indifference by Anne Fitzwarine.”

“ I will tell thee—I will tell thee,” said Miss Draycot, quite overcome by her emotion, and putting back the raven tresses from the fair brow of Lady Anne, “ such a tale of grief, dear child, as shall make thy gentle heart bleed for pity : poor Emma ! it was but after the lapse of years that I learned how cruelly she had been treated ; oh ! had I known of them, I had been the first to support her amid her sorrows.”

Even while Miss Draycot spoke, the door of the apartment again opened, and, ushered by old Bateman, Alice Morland entered, accompanied by Father Lawson and Sybil Mandeville. The hoods which had concealed the faces of the females in the morning were now thrown back, and discovered the youthful and beautiful countenance of Sybil, and in Alice that of a woman somewhat past the middle age, whose striking features had, perhaps, been more pleasing if less severe.

On the appearance of Alice, Miss Draycot advanced hastily, with both hands extended. “ Ah !” she exclaimed, “ I need not ask if Alice Morland stands before me ! You, who I was told lingered by poor Emma to the last, faithful even amid poverty and ill-repute, why have such weary years rolled by,

why have we not seen you here before? Oh, surely you should have known that one who so faithfully abided by Emma Frankley had a claim at Draycot which would never be denied!"

"Well do I believe you, Lady," replied Alice Morland; "but," she added, with a slight air of pride, which harmonized well with her imposing features, and tall stately figure, "I come not hither to make claims in my own behalf;" then Alice hesitated, and looked for a moment doubtfully towards Lady Anne, who, alike interested by the intellectual countenance of Lawson, and the appearance of his female companions, was an earnest spectator of the scene. On catching the doubtful look of Alice, however, the young lady immediately offered to withdraw, but Miss Draycot interposed. "Nay, Alice," she said, "fear not to speak before the daughter of Lord Aumerle—thy secret will be safe in the bosom of Lady Anne Fitzwarine as in mine own."

"Indeed, Madam, I do crave the lady's pardon," answered Alice, taking Sybil by the hand, and drawing her forwards, for she had shrunk into the shade between her two protectors. "Well do I know," pursued Alice, "that the name of Fitzwarine is a guarantee for all that is generous and noble; in the illustrious father of that lady, Madam, in the Earl of Aumerle, no less than yourself and Mr. Draycot, have I hoped to find a protector for the lawful heiress of Rodenhurst, the defrauded Sybil Mandeville."

"Ah, Madam!" cried Sybil, and, yielding to the impulse of the moment and the kind looks of Miss Draycot, she withdrew her hand from the clasp of Alice, and approached nearer to the lady—"Ah, Madam!" she said, "may I hope that in you I shall find one who, for love of my mother, will spare her daughter an honourable name. Oh, Madam! in my brief span of existence, even, I have learned that the world is base; and because Sybil Mandeville is poor and betrayed, and has no might to force her right, those affect to believe Emma Frankley frail, whose blood should most kindle at aspersions on her honour. It is because Sir Andrew Luntley holds my land, that the relations of my mother would deny to me even the name of

Mandeville, lest the robber whom they fear should imagine that they take part with the orphan whom he has plundered. Ah, Miss Draycot! I do think that you will believe me when I say that, dear as wealth and station are to the youthful heart, and I will own the world has taught me well their value, yet is it my dearest hope to fling back, in their faces who uttered them, the stigmas that have been cast upon my mother's name."

So full, even to bursting, was the heart of Sybil, when touching on the story of her mother's wrongs, that she heeded not who entered the room. Some surprise, then, she felt, when, as she ceased speaking, her hand was warmly grasped, and a rough, hearty voice exclaimed—"Never fear, brave lass! but thou shalt be held as a right Mandeville at Draycot; and it shall go hard with its owner, but he makes the swelled serpent Luntley disgorge his ill-got spoil, and yield the daughter of Gerald Mandeville her fair manor of Rodenhurst, together with her honourable name!"

As Sybil looked up to thank her new friend, the Squire of Draycot, she perceived in him a gentleman who had perhaps a little turned his sixtieth year, but his old age was

"Like a lusty winter,
Frosty, but kindly!"

The brightest of winter berries, too, might have been shamed by the clear healthy colour on his cheek; and his erect and muscular frame might have been envied by scores of younger men; while his large dark blue eye danced as merrily as that of his youthful son. A most unusual dimness, however, came across the eyes of the Squire of Draycot, as he looked more steadily at the features of Sybil; he dashed his hand impatiently across them, then he clenched and shook it with a most menacing air at Alice Morland. "And, thou good for nought!" he exclaimed, "where has it pleased thee to hide thyself for these twenty years with this girl, who has the name of Mandeville written so plainly in her face?"

"You will pardon my seclusion, Squire, when at full length you know its cause," said Alice, stepping forwards, with a

manner as quiet as that of Mildred Draycot herself, but mixed with something of a severe and queen-like dignity: "the tale, however, is a long one; and I, who know you, Squire, doubt that you are in no mood for hearing it to-night."

"In good faith thou art right, Alice," answered the Squire; "I am as little changed in my temper as thou art in thy looks; and thou, Alice, hast been cheating father Time of his dues, or those dark brown locks of thine had worn a paler hue. But this night I have resolved to be merry, and thy tale I know beforehand has a smack of sorrow in it; therefore will I have none of it to-night: and you shall come with me, and see some glad faces in the hall; I will show thee that old Harry Draycot is what young Harry Draycot was, and what young Harry Draycot will be."

"I know, Squire," said Alice, smiling, "that there is no gainsaying your resolves, therefore must my poor little Sybil abide with her story, and her gratitude, till the morning; yet you, who know that the old faith of our land was in the heart of Emma Frankley and in mine, will permit me, in this gentleman, Mr. Robert Lawson, to introduce you to one who can, on all points connected with the marriage of Sybil's mother, meet the inquiries of honour, if not the severities of the law."

"And I," said the frank Squire, extending his hand to Lawson, "am happy to welcome to Draycot one who, from what you say, Alice, I can well believe risks fearful peril in the orphan's cause."

"Name not my peril, I beseech you, good Sir," said Lawson, returning with equal cordiality the warm grasp of the Squire's hand. "I were unworthy of my calling, if I cavilled in a right cause from a miserable fear for self: yet one apprehension I have had, Mr. Draycot, from which your kindly reception of my poor Sybil sets me free; for you know, Mr. Draycot, that from the existing laws of England I am a doomed man, from the moment that I set foot on its shores: easy then would it have been for her powerful foe, by aiming his blow through me, to have destroyed the wronged heiress while I was her only protector."

"Be of good heart, then, Sir," answered the Squire; "it shall irk you no more that you are the only protector of a fair damsel. Our poor guests, sister Mildred, are longing in the hall for the gracious presence of Lady Anne, on whose part I have ventured to promise that she will look in on their festivities; and I am sure by the very glance of our dear Sybil's eye that she too loves to see merry faces."

"Nay, brother," interposed Mildred, "it may be that Miss Mandeville, and her friends, have but just ended a long journey, and would like better a quiet chamber than the boisterous merriment of your hall to-night."

"And for me, good Sir," cried Lawson, "I must, I fear, in prudence return to the village inn; for an ill chance this morning threw us into the company not only of Dr. Croxall, but of Sybil's greatest enemy, Sir Andrew himself, with whom I find that the rector is intimate. Our lives have been for many years passed in such seclusion, that we knew not either that Sir Andrew was a dweller near Draycot, or that Croxall, who by ill-fortune was a former intimate of mine, was its rector."

"Then," said the Squire, "this rascally Whig parson has, I presume, claimed thee as an acquaintance?"

"Even so, Sir," answered Lawson, "nor will it, I think, be on my part a prudent step to reject too roughly the renewal of intimacy which he has proffered. Hence must I call at the rectory to-night. With submission too I would urge, that till we have held some consultation as to the means by which we may turn the consequences of Sir Andrew's crimes back upon his own head, it were well perhaps that, thus in his immediate vicinity, Sybil should still bear that name of Meynell which has hitherto screened her from his malice."

"Not in my house, Master Lawson!" said the old Squire, impatiently: "I care not for the malice of Sir Andrew, if he had the devil as well as Hoadley to aid him, though, indeed, he who is so secure of the Whig Bishop's help cannot fail in having that of his master; but neither Whig Baronet, Whig Bishop, nor Whig devil—and assuredly the devil is the father of Whiggery,

seeing he was the first who grumbled at a lawful authority—none of these, I say, shall forbid to the daughter of Gerald Mandeville her own name in Harry Draycot's house. So get thee gone, Sir Priest, and try thy wit against that of Sir Parson, while I craze the gallants of Stafford with the beauty of Lady Anne Fitzwarine, and the Heiress of Rodenhurst."

So saying, the true-hearted old Squire led away Sybil and Lady Anne, promising the former that, if she was really wearied by her journey, she should retire to her chamber in ten minutes, but that time she must spare, to see how happy he had been able, for one night at least, to make his dear villagers.

CHAPTER IV

Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
These simple blessings of the lowly train,
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art!

DESERTED VILLAGE.

THE hall in the Manor House at Draycot, where the villagers were assembled, was a very spacious apartment, its roof supported by pillars of oak; at the upper end of this hall was a gallery, which, in times of festivity, was appropriated to the use of the musicians. It was not, however, so occupied on the evening to which we allude; such instrumental performers as the village of Draycot could boast were gathered on a platform, hastily raised at the opposite end of the hall. The apartment was lighted by a number of lamps slung between the columns on either side; and such attempts at decorations from the gardens had been made, as the season of the year would permit. Long wreaths of ivy, branches of arbutus and holly, were fastened to the columns; but, to give a gayer appearance to their dark verdure, the fingers of the maidens at the Manor, and some of the young village girls, had been very busy entwining long

strings of the yellow crocus, the delicate snowdrop, and the early violet; they had been successful in obtaining a good supply of these flowers, as the weather was, for the season of the year, unusually mild. These spring flowers, therefore, intermingled with the evergreens, looked gaily, contrasting with their dark green. Light steps, and, better still, light hearts were in the old hall that night, and certainly the village musicians exhibited a wonderful degree of zeal and spirit in their art, and without a symptom of weariness conducted every movement *con spirito*. The truth is, that these men were really tolerable performers; Mr. Draycot had been at the expense of hiring them from the city of Lichfield at a fixed salary to dwell in the village of Draycot; and this he had done in a measure purely to annoy Sir Andrew, who had on more than one occasion been heard openly to express his aversion to dancing, fiddling, and all such profane, and in his esteem papistical diversions.

Neither did our musicians, on the night to which we allude, lack any physical stimulants to exertion; ever and anon, when the weary rustics had fairly "tired each other down," came the "old blue-coated serving men," with cups of goodly spiced ale, and such thick slices of sweet cake as a fine lady would have swooned to look upon, in these days at least, when an ostentatious pretension, and scanty fare, supply in many houses the once hearty hospitality of "Old England." But, delighted as the Draycot villagers had been the whole evening with their music, and their dancing, and their good fare, and the kind shake of the hand which they had from Bateman, the old butler, and the more stately condescension of Mistress Wilson, the housekeeper, as she swept round the circle in her best grey silk gown, and lace cap—delighted as they had been with all this, the measure of their satisfaction was still increased, when the young Squire himself entered the hall, and led the prettiest of the village maidens down a dance, Lord Fitzwarine leaning against one of the pillars, and looking on. What giggling and blushing was there then among the lasses of the village; and how proud was Mistress Phœbe, with her scarlet petticoat and

gay chintz gown, and cherry-coloured ribbons, which were scarce sufficient to confine her abundant hair!

Among the groups of happy villagers, however, Lord Fitzwarine, as he stood by the pillar, noticed a strange-looking being, of whom it would have been difficult to decide whether he really partook in the mirth around him or not. Nature had fixed this poor creature among the class of the unfortunate. His height did not exceed that of a moderately-sized boy of twelve years old, while his pale, thin face seemed sunk in the enormous hump that rose between his shoulders; the shockingly vacant expression of confirmed idiocy was in general painfully apparent in his lack-lustre eye, and gaping mouth; but at times those who knew silly Jemmy well said that this vacancy vanished, and gave place to a kind of intelligence, which in its extreme malignity was even more disagreeable to behold; at these times a sort of red fiery light was in his little deep-set grey eyes; his thin lips tightened, or, if they relaxed into a smile, it was one which might truly have been termed diabolical. It had on more than one occasion required the exertion of all Mr. Draycot's humanity and influence to prevent this wretched creature from being very roughly used by the villagers, to whom he was in truth a perfect pest, his favourite amusements being to worry cats, frighten children, and steal the eggs from the goodwives' hencoops. With a portion, too, of that cunning which is not uncommon among idiots, and of which he possessed a most abundant share, Master Jemmy had confidentially informed some among the rustics that he was in high favour with, and in some sort an adopted child of his majesty, the sovereign of the infernal regions: after gravely whispering this important news, it was Jemmy's custom to cut such a caper as Perrot might strive in vain to rival; and then, crouching down, he would twist his naturally ugly features into such hideous and extraordinary grimaces, that the poor peasants might well imagine he could have learned them only from a fiend. Time had been when Jemmy was the sworn foe of the Draycot family, and had threatened them with certain pains

and penalties to be imposed by the high master whom he openly professed to serve: silly Jemmy considered that he had a sufficient reason for this enmity, inasmuch as that young Harry Draycot, when he was about fifteen years of age, had thought proper to inflict on him a very severe drubbing, for frightening into a fit, which nearly cost her her life, a little girl of the village. Silly Jemmy was in the habit of boasting that he had an exceedingly good memory, and not without reason; for, idiot as he was, for purposes of spite, his recollection was never known to fail. Thus did he vow vengeance upon the young Squire, till the pious Sir Andrew, whose eggs Jemmy had ventured to steal, got up against him the old charge of sorcery, and would have set him swimming for his life, had not Harry Draycot opportunely come up, as he was ready bound, and rescued him from the Baronet's servants, their master having abetted, and in fact silyly instigated, their barbarous design. From that day Jemmy professed to have forgiven the young Squire, though this was a point upon which old Bateman and wise Mrs. Wilson occasionally expressed a doubt, for they liked not the malicious looks which silly Jemmy still at times directed at their young master. Neither the old Squire nor his son, however, would allow Jemmy to be excluded from the Manor House, upon any season of enjoyment for the villagers; and as he knew that Bateman had authority to send him away, if he ventured to be mischievous, Jemmy, upon these occasions, conducted himself with what he considered an amazing share of propriety.

It should be observed that the enormous bulk which his hump gave to the head and shoulders of silly Jemmy was contrasted by an exceeding spareness of limb and person: to this he owed an agility and swiftness of foot which the youngest peasant could not rival; and thus it was that he kept time to the music, darting through the groups of dancers with an inconceivable rapidity, bounding, leaping, and jumping in a manner that excited the astonishment and amusement of Lord Fitzwarine. Jemmy's dress, be it observed, was no less remarka-

ble than his person: on this occasion he was attired in a coat and waistcoat of yellow silk, embroidered with flowers, and which he had himself manufactured out of a sack which had particularly struck his fancy when worn by Miss Draycot, and which he had begged of that lady when she had done with it: unfortunately the lower portion of Jemmy's attire by no means corresponded with the gaiety of his coat; the unmentionable part of his dress having been taken from an old scarecrow, and his legs cased in a very ragged pair of worsted stockings. To make amends, however, for these defects in the lower portions of his dress, Jemmy had, in his own opinion, most admirably patched them with pieces of cloth, stuff, and silk, having been at some pains in collecting these rags to secure among them every colour in the rainbow. Thus, as a whole, his appearance very much resembled that which a chimneysweep makes on May-day.

As we have before observed, whether Jemmy was really pleased or not, Lord Fitzwarine could not resolve: sometimes, as he shot past the dancers, the vacant expression of his natural idiotcy alone appeared in his face; then, again, the fiery light darted from his eyes, and he scowled from under his pent brow with a deadly malice; once, too, as he skimmed by the young lord, the latter heard him mutter in a low fiendish kind of chuckle, "I'll tell, I'll tell! Oh, oh! they are very merry—but I'll tell, I'll tell!"

Struck by this expression, Lord Fitzwarine beckoned a farmer, who stood near, and questioned him respecting the idiot.

"Indeed, my Lord," replied the farmer, after speaking of Jemmy's mischievous tricks, "it were well if the Squire could be prevailed on to send him out of the village; but because it must be owned he has been more than once rather roughly used among the lads, Mr. Draycot thinks all the harm is in those who tease him, and none in Jemmy himself; but, indeed, so spiteful and mischievous an imp does not live, and he is at least as much of a knave as a fool."

"Ah! ah! Farmer Ashley—good, honest Farmer Ashley!" said Jemmy, bounding towards Lord Fitzwarine and his companion, and assuming one of his most spiteful grins; "Jemmy has long ears—so he is more knave than fool!—Oh, honest, honest Farmer Ashley!—take care, take care, Farmer Ashley: I am an imp, you say,—yes, yes, so I am—an imp, a brave imp, the devil's own son—so beware, Farmer Ashley; for my father has a great power in this fine world!"

The frightful contortions of the idiot's face while he spoke thus would have excited in Lord Fitzwarine a disposition to laughter, had they not also roused a feeling of horror and disgust; while the poor farmer fidgeted about, and looked on his part as though he were not quite sure that there was not some truth in Jemmy's claim of relationship. As the latter ceased speaking, his countenance fell from its expression of active malice, into one of utter fatuity; and he stood gaping at Lord Fitzwarine, apparently regardless of the farmer's presence. His then dull-looking eyes wandered over the young nobleman's face, and finally settled upon the glittering links of his watch chain; he put forth his hand as if he would fain have snatched at the ornament, and withdrew it with an appearance of effort.

"I do love gold!" he then said, with an earnest air.

"You love gold, Jemmy!" said Lord Fitzwarine.

"Yes, yes, I do—I do," answered the idiot—"hark but to this now: you are a lord, they say, a great rich lord; should a lord wonder to hear a fool say that he loves gold? Do not wise men love gold? Yes, they do, they do; my father buys souls with the bright yellow gold: oh! if I had gold, a mountain of gold, then I would buy, I would buy!—"

"Well, what wouldst thou buy, Jemmy?" inquired Fitzwarine.

"Wits, wits," answered the idiot, eagerly: "oh! I would be a wise man—I would buy great heaps of wisdom!"

"My poor fellow!" replied Lord Fitzwarine, "do you then think that wisdom is to be bought?"

"Yes, yes," answered Jemmy, laughing, "the rich are the wise men—the fools are the poor ones: oh! gold is a great thing, and he must be wise who gets it in a huge heap; oh! the poor man goes barefoot, and the rich one rides in a gilt coach—silly Jemmy can tell which is the greater fool! But, if he had gold, he would be as wise as Sir Andrew, and then Sir Andrew should see, and—and—" here Jemmy paused in his chuckling; and, as he raised his eyes at the moment to the music gallery, his wandering fancy was caught by the figures of the old Squire and Sybil, who, with the Earl, his daughter, and several other of Mr. Draycot's guests, at that moment entered.

The pillars which supported the gallery, and which ran up to the roof of the hall, were profusely hung with lamps, and the strong light from these lamps beamed full upon the beautiful face and graceful figure of Sybil, as she was led forwards by the old Squire. She had, when at the inn, where she had rested since the morning, changed her travelling attire for a dress of emerald green silk, the dark colour of which set off the whiteness of her skin, slightly concealed as it was by the rich lace that shaded her bosom, and the ruffles of the same material that hung over her delicate arms. One ornament alone had Sybil, and this was sufficiently costly: it was not, however, for its intrinsic value that she prized it, or that her friends, Lawson and Alice, had preserved the rich bauble through every chance and change: no, it was because it was her father's bridal gift to the mother of Sybil, a link in the chain of that evidence by which they yet hoped to prove her title to the name of Mandeville. This ornament, then, consisted of a chain of diamonds, from which was suspended a miniature of Gerald Mandeville, encircled with the same costly gems. It was the glittering of these diamonds round the neck of Sybil, as she stood in the strong light of the lamps that overhung the gallery, which first drew the attention of silly Jemmy: from the sparkling stones his eyes wandered to the face of their wearer, and its excessive beauty seemed apparent even to his misty faculties; true, nevertheless, to the malice of his nature, he crept close to the village

beauty, Mistress Phœbe, and cried, pointing as he spoke to Sybil, "Look, look, pretty Phœbe, look there! oh, oh! is your face like yon lady's? Oh, oh, what a little turned-up nose, and what a coarse red cheek! Oh! the pretty lady, oh! now, if silly Jemmy were a lord!"—Then he whisked from the side of Phœbe to that of the young Squire, and, snatching at his hand, cried, "Stoop, stoop, Harry Draycot, and hear poor silly Jemmy speak a word;" but, when Draycot bent his head, he whispered, in the low chuckling tone which Lord Fitzwarine had thought so repulsive, "Look, look, Master Harry, at that fair damsel on your father's right hand; see how the young lord looks at her; is she his sister? Eh? Oh, oh, look to your chances, Master Harry; see but how fair she is, and how the bright jewels glitter on her neck!"

"Out of the way, Jemmy!" cried Draycot, pushing the idiot somewhat roughly on one side, in his anxiety to learn who was this beautiful vision, appearing so suddenly among his father's guests.

"Oh, I'll tell!" muttered Jemmy, pursuing the young man with one of his looks of hatred, as, in company with Lord Fitzwarine, whose attention had also been excited by the appearance of Sybil, he bent his way towards the upper end of the hall, from whence a flight of broad stairs led to the music gallery.

"You rascal! what will you tell?" exclaimed Farmer Ashley, who had heard the idiot's muttered threat.

Jemmy knew very well that the farmer loved him not, and he felt that the existing companionship between Ashley's hand and his throat was more close than agreeable. "Why, why, Farmer Ashley," he cried, with a gibbering sound, something between a chuckle and a sob, "I meant only I would tell, I would tell what a fair damsel is among the guests at Draycot."

"I do believe," said the farmer, "that, scanty as thy wits may be, Jemmy, they never fail thee in furnishing a lie; but get thee gone, and beware how thou tellest aught but the truth of Farmer Ashley."

The idiot slunk away as the farmer loosed his hold; and, as he

hid himself among the crowd, he muttered between his set teeth, but in so low a tone that none might distinguish his words, "Yes, yes, the fool may match with the farmer; Jemmy will tell truth of thee, Farmer Ashley: oh! who said in his cups, 'Hurra for Prince Charlie!' oh, oh! when the ale was in, the wit was out: and where was the fox slain to-day? the fox with the scarlet coat, oh, clever Farmer Ashley!"

The meditations of silly Jemmy were, however, now interrupted by the pressing forwards of the rustics round him to gain a word or a smile from the old Squire, who had descended into the hall with his distinguished guests, and who was returning the rude bows and courtesies of the villagers with many a kind word and hearty shake of the hand. In the swaying backwards and forwards of the crowd, Jemmy, though much shorter than those around him, caught sight of Sybil, whom the Squire was leading by the hand. Mr. Draycot paused when about the centre of the hall; and, addressing his rural guests, he said, "My friends, we would have the visit of the noble Earl of Aumerle to Draycot recorded in your thoughts as a pleasant time, devoted to a renewal of the hearty merriment of old England. To-day is the 16th of March, and next Thursday will be the Feast of St. Bennet, the patron of our parish church; in honour of the Saint, then, we will have on the eve of his festival some of the ancient pastimes which have been long swept out of the list of the people's enjoyments. And, if you relish the old English fare which is prepared for you to-night, let the name of the Earl of Aumerle be first remembered when the cup of ale goes round!"

An enthusiastic cry of, "Long live the noble Earl, and our good Squire!" here interrupted Mr. Draycot; but, when it had somewhat subsided, he drew Sybil, whose hand he had retained, a little more forwards, and said, in a graver and sadder tone, "My friends, there are many among you from whose minds the lapse even of twenty years has not erased all recollection of an old companion of mine, once well known, and as well beloved at Draycot; his daughter now stands before you, defrauded of her birthright by him whose hand lies so heavily on the industrious

and the poor : remember Gerald Mandeville and his daughter Sybil, then, to-night, and drink, ' Confusion to Sir Andrew Luntley, and health and long life to the rightful heiress of Rodenhurst ! ' "

Another loud acclaim burst forth at these words ; and Farmer Ashley, with several other of the elders of the village, pressed forwards to obtain a word or a look from Sybil, whose parents they had so well known : among these the hunchback Jemmy contrived to force his way, muttering in an inaudible tone, and with malice more than idiotey in his eyes. As it happened, in jostling and pushing among those who were much taller than himself, he was at last thrust so rudely beyond the limits of the circle which surrounded the Squire and his noble guests, that he lost his footing, and as he stretched out his hand and caught at Sybil's robe to prevent himself from falling, Lord Fitzwarine, who stood nearest to her, stepped forwards, and, putting his arm between her and the hunchback, bade the latter with some haughtiness, stand back. The sudden interposition of Lord Fitzwarine completely overbalanced silly Jemmy, and he fell forwards with such violence on the stone floor, that when he scrambled, which he immediately did, to his feet, his face was covered with blood.

None present were more concerned at the injury which the idiot had thus sustained than he who had unwittingly caused it ; for Lord Fitzwarine would not willingly have given pain to the meanest of God's creatures, though, like his father, he was fully sensible of the advantages attendant on his own high birth and exalted rank, and would rigidly have kept unbroken the circles which edge the different grades of society, from that of the peasant to that of the King. With a voice and look of true compassion, then, it was, that the young nobleman immediately stepped towards the idiot : but the latter, rudely drawing back, wiped the blood from his face, and, scowling at Sybil and Fitzwarine by turns, gibbered so fast, and in a voice so choked with rage, that its accents were utterly unintelligible ; then, when old Bateman stepped forwards by the Squire's desire to re-

move him, he broke away, and, pushing through the crowd with a kind of fury, rushed out of the house, and was seen by some of the servants running across the moonlighted park with an inconceivable rapidity. At the concern which Lord Fitzwarine expressed for the accident Harry Draycot laughed, saying, "Give him a broad gold piece in the morning, Fitzwarine, and silly Jemmy will be your devoted servant; the rascal, he loves money like a wise man!"

Farmer Ashley, however, who was in hearing of this, shook his head: "Ah, Master Harry! Master Harry!" said he, "you will never believe till it is too late that there is more malice than stupidity in hunchback Jemmy."

CHAPTER V

Sir Giles. In being out of office, I am out of danger.

————— 'tis enough I keep

Greedy at my devotion: so he serve

My purpose, let him hang, or damn, I care not:

Friendship is but a word.

Marrall. You are all wisdom.

Sir Giles. I would be worldly wise; for the other wisdom,

That does prescribe us a well-governed life,

And to do right to others as ourselves,

I value not an atom.

NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS.

ABOUT the time that the happy tenants of Mr. Draycot sat down to their cheerful supper, came in great speed to Luntley Hall a messenger from London, with letters to its owner. These letters had been sent express from the Capital; and, much as the servants of the Baronet feared their haughty master, they felt that missives of such importance must at once be delivered to his hand. From the insensibility into which he had

fallen in the morning, as it seemed, on viewing the countenance of Sybil, Sir Andrew did not fairly recover till after he had been conveyed by Croxall and Lawson to his own home. There he had been attended by a surgeon, by whom he had been bled, and recommended to keep perfectly quiet. To preserve quiet was, however, no easy matter to the irritable Baronet; his nerves rejected the opiate which the surgeon had administered, and consequently it increased, instead of allaying their excitement. Unable, then, to endure the disjointed and hideous visions which kept flitting through his brain, Sir Andrew, after some hours, summoned his valet; and though, on attempting to stand, he staggered and reeled like a drunken man, he wrapped himself in a dressing gown of rich brocade, and proceeded to a small but luxurious apartment which opened from his bed chamber. With the assistance of his servant, Sir Andrew tottered to a sofa, and, motioning to the man to draw near him a table covered with writing materials, he bade him light two lamps which stood upon it, and leave the room.

Rather seemed that room befitting the occupation of some voluptuous queen, than that of the iron-framed and hard-featured, active, restless man of business who was its owner. The form of the apartment was oval, and, the curtains being drawn from a deep bay window opposite to the fireplace, admitted a view of the pleasure gardens, now lighted by a full moon, and exhibiting, from their abundance of evergreens, fanciful pavilions and groups of graceful statuary, a scene of tranquil beauty. These curtains, which fell round the window in folds of massive drapery, were composed of the richest amber-coloured satin damask, looped and fringed with silver: the cushions of the chairs and couches were of the same material, and their framework of ebony, curiously inlaid with a flower work of silver. Instead of paper or hangings, the walls of the apartment were panelled alternately with ebony, bordered with a flower work like that on the chairs and couches, and sheets of plate glass; each of the ebony panels being also adorned with a cabinet painting of rare beauty and costly price. The ceil-

ing, too, of this apartment had been painted by a master hand ; the centre piece was divided from those which encircled it by a rich fretting of silver. The appointments of the fireplace were in the same style of adornment, the stove, the fender, and fire irons being of fine steel embossed with silver. On the mantel-piece, of the purest white marble, and on pedestals of the same, placed before the mirror panels, were vases of exquisite china, filled with choice exotics, which at that season of the year more particularly it had cost a large sum to raise. More than one costly cabinet from Japan, too, was in that gorgeous room ; and, in accordance with its other luxuries, the carpet was amber-coloured velvet, so curiously and thickly wrought with flowers in floss silk, that it yielded with a wonderful softness to the pressure of the foot.

A doubtful smile played about the lips of Sir Andrew as he gazed round his splendid abode : did the gewgaws he had there collected yield a real satisfaction to his soul ? Alas ! that smile was of "such a sort," it might indicate the triumph of violence, or fraud, or cunning, but never the sweet satisfaction of a heart at ease.

Let it not, however, be imagined that a thought of regret for aught that he had done was in the heart of Sir Andrew Luntley — that the appointments of his superb mansion bore for his mental eye a stain of the blood and tears of the despairing and broken-hearted by which they had been so dearly bought. No ; the suffering written in Sir Andrew's smile was not human in its character ; rather did it betoken the triumph of a fiend, which, amid the torments of a never-dying agony, mocked at the weaker spirits whose ruin its deccits had wrought. The smile, however, briefly passed away, and a dark frown lowered on the brow of the restless schemer, while he muttered in a low bitter tone : " Is it for this that I have toiled and plotted, to know not so much quiet in my gilded chambers as the weary peasant finds within his cot ? What was that form which this morning startled my senses out of the control of my will ? 'Tis but a shape, a substance given to the phantom which has broken on my rest

for years. Yet let me be equal to myself: if the dark suspicion which has risen on me, the curse alike of enjoyment at the festive board, and of quiet sleep upon my midnight couch—if at last this suspicion is to start out a thing of reality, hideous even as the phantom which preceded it, were it not well, were it not even better to be so? For when did reality of danger threaten me that I failed to turn the ruin back upon their heads who had fondly hoped to compass mine! And if it be—if it be,” pursued Sir Andrew—“if from thine ashes, Gerald Mandeville, one arises to avenge thy fate! much will depend upon the station and character of those who espouse a cause so romantic. This mad fox hunt, too, will serve me well. I cannot bear this suspense. Something, I remember, Croxall said to me this morning of knowing the traveller who was in company with the girl whose features are so like, so like—” whispered Sir Andrew, in a tone so low as if he feared even the sound of his own words, “so like those which have so long since lost the form and semblance of humanity!”

As Luntley thus muttered to himself at intervals, a ghastly pallor, not altogether attributable to his accident of the morning, overspread his face, and more than once he glanced furtively round the room; but nought was about him save images of luxury and light, the ruddy blaze of the large fire, and the flood of clear moonlight streaming in at the uncurtained window, and the steady flame of the two lamps on the table before him, all reflected in the numerous mirrors which lined the apartment.

“No, no,” pursued the Baronet, resuming after a pause of some minutes the low husky tone in which he had hitherto communed with himself—“this uncertainty I cannot bear. I will send to the rectory. Croxall knows these strangers, and he will come hither promptly at my bidding; for, if he will have me traffic in the stocks with the proceeds of his rich endowments, I will have him move like a puppet at my will and pleasure: I love to keep this reverend doctor at my beck. Oh, our Holy Mother the Church! I like to see thy proud head

bowed a little ; an undue leaning hast thou towards the scarlet arrogance of Rome herself ; but I warrant the bit will be fairly in thy mouth, while Croxall is one of thy reverend Doctors ! and Hoadley a Lord Bishop !”

With these thoughts half made audible, Sir Andrew rang a hand bell which was on the table ; but, ere the servants could have had time to answer that summons, the door of the apartment opened, and the Baronet’s valet appeared, bearing on a salver the missives which had just arrived from London. Large and magnificent seals, with coronets, and official stamps, were appended to them, and one letter bore even the royal arms.

The Baronet’s heart beat somewhat quicker than usual, as, eagerly raising himself from his reclining posture, and overcoming in his strong mental excitement all his bodily indisposition, he grasped the uppermost of these missives ; but, ere he broke the seal, he bade the man send a messenger to the rectory, praying that, if Dr. Croxall had not yet retired, he would hasten immediately to Luntley Hall, as he, Sir Andrew, desired to have speech with him that night.

When the servant had departed, Sir Andrew opened the first of his letters. It was from a nobleman—one whose command of ministerial influence somewhat exceeded his command of cash ; in his letter he spoke of certain arbitrary proceedings of Sir Andrew, which had reached the ears of members of the opposition, and which, as the Baronet was well known to be upon the best terms with the ministry, would, urged the nobleman, be somewhat disagreeably insisted on. Sir Andrew must remember, too, he said, that the opposition was strengthened at that moment by the accession to its ranks of the heir apparent himself, the Prince of Wales.

Still, went on this gracious friend of the Baronet, the ministers would not readily give way to a clamour against so firm an adherent of liberty, and the true Protestant Succession. The letter concluded with an intimation of a vacant seat in the Commons, for which the son of this nobleman was to

present himself; and he doubted not that, though Sir Andrew himself so pertinaciously refused the senatorial dignity, he would, as heretofore, exert himself to place it in right hands.

A bitter smile again curled the lip of Sir Andrew, as he carefully refolded this letter: "So," he muttered, "more thousands—eh, my Lord! Truly these are honourable peers, and will not wink at a little peculation for a trifling bribe; but they might have some show of mercy in their friendship, and, where they are held scathless, yield me for my risk the lion's share. Eh—well, my Lord, thou hast a fair manor in Hampshire, which may bear a heavy mortgage yet; and grant thou me that, and the thousands shall be thine."

With this resolution, Sir Andrew took up the most splendidly emblazoned of the letters: "Ah! what have we here?" he said; "the hero of Culloden, the idol of a good Whig majority, and of a royal father's heart, pleading in most friendly and familiar style to low-born, low-bred Andrew Luntley, for gold to support him at the gaming table, and in the ring! Oh, the gold! the good red gold! 'tis well to cheat, and lie, and kill for gold! Why, gold is wealth, and rank, and power too; they all bow down the knee to gold! Who would not love gold, that brings princes to one's feet! Now, if this morning's apprehensions assume a dangerous aspect, then will this royal gambler bear me out. Sweet Prince, noble Prince! thou shalt have the gold forthwith, with an eye to emergencies, albeit thy demands are coming thick and fast."

With these reflections, Sir Andrew took up the last of his letters, and, as he broke the seal, and cast his eye carelessly over it, looked at the superscription. "So!" he thought, "Churchill, thou sendest confirmation of the news of yon right honourable knave, the Prince, the gracious upright Prince: those whom I have wronged are among his petitioners—they are so, are they? They must be looked to, then. Pshaw!" pursued Sir Andrew, "why writes Churchill to me that I should commend him to his brother poet, Croxall, and tell him to look in his school of poetry for a dangerous rival—the profligate! Now do I wonder

how a man can set his thoughts upon a piece of painted clay—such a puppet, such a toy as woman is !”

What further excellent moral reflections Sir Andrew might have made were at this moment unfortunately interrupted by a loud and piercing scream, which seemed as if uttered almost within the walls of the apartment which he tenanted : the sickly whiteness of a corpse immediately spread over the face of the guilty Baronet, and, conscience-stricken, he started from the sofa.

Again the shriek rang through the night air; and Sir Andrew then perceived, laid close against one of the window panes, a strange eldritch face, which he knew to be that of the idiot Jemmy. The apartment which Sir Andrew occupied was above the ground floor of his mansion; but a kind of trellis work of iron was there fastened to the wall of the house, upon which in summer were trained some rare creeping plants; and by aid of this trellis work, the hunchback, who could climb like a wild cat, had raised himself to a level with the window.

Though the frame of Sir Andrew had been considerably shaken by the accident and the fright of the morning, his anger and surprise made him lose all sense of indisposition; and, striding hastily across the apartment, he unfastened the window, and, bidding Jemmy enter the room, angrily asked how he had dared enter his private grounds, or climb up to that window. With a spring like that of some animal, the idiot bounded from the window sill to the centre of the splendid apartment, and, spinning like a teetotum on the rich carpet, he yelled with delirious joy.

“Knave !” said the irritated Baronet, approaching, and giving the hunchback a hearty cuff on the ear, “if thou dost not tell why thou hast come hither, thou shalt have a hearty sup of that horse pond with which I once before threatened thee.”

The blow seemed immediately to restore silly Jemmy to as great a portion of consciousness as he could at any time boast of possessing; he assumed a sullen, downcast look, and muttered, “Sir Andrew told Jemmy he would never strike!—

Jemmy has news to tell—what Sir Andrew would give him one, two, three pieces of bright gold to hear ; but Sir Andrew gives blows, so Jemmy may as well go take them from Harry Draycot and his friends ;” and, as he spoke, the hunchback pointed to his lips, swollen by his fall upon the hall floor at Draycot.

“ Nay, Jemmy,” said the Baronet, approaching, “ I am sorry that I hurt thee, but thou madest me angry, coming hither in so strange a mode.”

“ Sir Andrew said, he liked not his servants should see him talk with Jemmy,” replied the idiot, sullenly.

“ Well, well,” returned the Baronet ; “ but thou knowest, unless I were sick almost to death, I should not fail to meet thee to-morrow morning, as is my weekly custom, in the south shrubbery ; but come, now thou art here, what is it thou hast to tell ?”

“ Sir Andrew will give one, two, three bright pieces, before Jemmy speaks,” said the idiot, with an obstinate air.

“ Thou extortionate knave !” answered the Baronet, “ I will do no such thing ; I never gave thee so much before ; they would take thee up for a thief, if thou wast seen with so much money ; and what wouldst thou do with it ?”

“ Hide it in the hollow oak, and talk to it of nights !” answered Jemmy : then, judging, as a wiser man might have done, from the Baronet’s air, that he was not likely to accede to his exorbitant demand, he suddenly reduced it, and added, “ Jemmy will tell something, if Sir Andrew will give him three pieces of bright silver.”

The Baronet gave the required coin, and then the idiot, peering cunningly into his face, exclaimed, in an exulting tone : “ Sir Andrew knows that Jemmy has a good memory — ”

“ Well, well, what of that ? I do know it,” replied the Baronet ; “ but what hast thou to tell now, Jemmy ?”

“ Sir Andrew remembers,” said the hunchback, in a low tone, “ that he slept one day last summer in one of his pleasant bowers ; that, when he awakened, silly Jemmy was by his side : Sir Andrew talked with spirits in his sleep that day, and he named a name !——”

"Ah!" gasped the Baronet; and, sinking back upon the sofa, where he had resumed his seat, his face fading again to a horrible whiteness, he looked an object little less pitiable than the half-witted wretch who stood before him.

Without, however, seeming to notice the Baronet's agitation, the idiot went on—"That name was Mandeville! and old Harry Draycot has a fair damsel, called Sybil Mandeville, at his house to-night—oh, oh, and they'll toast Sir Andrew with the devil, with the devil!"

The mention of the name which in truth he had most dreaded to hear, while it increased the exigency of his situation, seemed to restore to Sir Andrew all the powers of his naturally strong mind: he inquired if the hunchback had more to tell.

"Sir Andrew loves Farmer Ashley?" said the idiot, indignantly.

"Aye, that I do, the knave!" replied the Baronet, grinding his teeth, "though forsooth he would no longer be my tenant. I will ruin, I will ruin him yet."

"Sir Andrew," cried Jemmy, standing on tiptoe, and creeping nearer to the Baronet, "Farmer Ashley cries, in his drink, 'Hurra, hurra for Prince Charlie!'"

What reply might have been made by Sir Andrew to this important intelligence we cannot undertake to say, as at that moment a tap for admittance was heard at the chamber door, accompanied by the voice of Croxall, demanding permission to enter.

"What shall I do with thee now, Jemmy!" cried the Baronet, in a hasty whisper; but the idiot, with a brief but strange grimace, darted towards the window, which Sir Andrew had only partially closed, and dropped from it on the soft mould below.

"Truly, mine excellent friend, Sir Andrew," said Croxall, as a minute afterwards he entered the room, and perceived Sir Andrew fastening the window—"truly the vigour of thy constitution is no less to be envied than that of thy mind: another man than thyself would have kept his bed for a week after such an accident as thine of the morning, but here thou art so soon after thy mishap——"

"Ready to plan my revenge upon its contriver!" said Sir Andrew, sharply interrupting the rector, and turning towards him a countenance at once so fierce and so ghastly, that Croxall, who was not violently malicious, shrank from him at the moment with a sensation nearly approaching to horror. In his own strong emotion, however, Sir Andrew noticed not that of his friend, but, motioning him to a chair, resumed his own seat on the sofa.

"Croxall," he then said, abruptly, "know you whether Arch-deacon Blackburne, or Dr. Hoadley, are now in London?"

"The Bishop" answered Croxall, "is, I believe, at this time at his palace at Chelsea; but with the whereabouts of Blackburne I cannot acquaint you; but may I ask why you make these inquiries?"

"Dr. Croxall," cried Sir Andrew, with an air of solemnity, "upon you I need scarce urge the necessity of suppressing in the people of this land all tendency towards the abominations of Popery; and most among those who, by possessing wealth and high birth, may by means of their influence lead many others with them into the paths of iniquity. The rich, the rich, Dr. Croxall, we must seek to turn from the errors of the Pope; or rather we must not suffer riches to be placed in the hands of his servants."

Croxall gazed upon the Baronet, as if he wondered in what this tirade was to end; while a certain merry twinkle in his eye said, almost as plainly as words could have done, "Come, come, Sir, Andrew, a truce to subterfuge between friends—speak plainly what would you be at!"

To speak with a direct plainness did not, however, suit Sir Andrew's purpose; and, fixing his keen grey eyes more sharply on the countenance of the rector, he went on with something of a cold irony in his looks, and tones—"No one will perceive the truth of all this sooner than mine excellent friend, Dr. Croxall. Good lack! what would become of the Protestant succession, and the illustrious House of Hanover, if Popery is again to ride rampant in the land? What would become of the plu-

ralities of Hoadley, if the High Churchman and the Tory be not curbed? Yes, our gracious ministry, who love liberty, know all this. They know that they must tread the Papist hard into the mire, and make for the Nonjuror and the Tory a scarecrow of his name; for they are aware that the right children of the English Church love not the Protestant succession, therefore do they wisely raise an outcry of Popery; or, wiser still, get the Atheist to write discussions on Theology, that the ministers of the Church may answer, and not trouble themselves about state affairs; while the rich endowments are all the while placed, my friend, in such excellent hands as thine, and Bishop Hoadley's. What matters it, if thy imagination be a little flighty; or if Hoadley cavil at the Creed? Ye are both right servants of the Whigs, and as masters they are truly wise."

While Sir Andrew spoke thus, a considerable change was visible in the expression of Croxall's eye; its dancing, merry twinkle died away, and was succeeded by something of an angry look, which, however, gave place to an air of indifference, as though he was perfectly satisfied that his own position was well understood by Luntley, and waited patiently to see how it would bear upon that of the Baronet himself. No more than a simple truth had been implied by the sarcasms of Sir Andrew. Croxall did indeed owe his preferment to his Whig principles. Nor was it less true that a bitter antipathy at that time existed between the Whig party and the English Church.

Samuel Croxall became first known to the public as the author of a poem of such an objectionable character, that it may not be named in these pages. It might appear that, whatever claim such a production might have upon notoriety, it possessed none for preferment in a Christian Church. The poetical talents of Dr. Croxall were, however, exerted in behalf of the Whigs also, and they could do no less than reward the pasquinades in which he so zealously supported their interests.

But, if a just sense of decency and morality is shocked in contemplating in the sacred office of a minister of the Gospel a man as unworthy as was Croxall, how will the true spirit of

the Church agree with the Socinianism of Hoadley, who reduced the most solemn sacrament to the level of a common supper?

Francis Blackburne, too—the well-known author of the Confessional—wherefore was he, with his dark Calvinism, a clergyman of the English Church? Such men as Hoadley and Blackburne, however, were the clergy who were patronized by the Whig ministers of the first two Georges—men who, without one particle of the Catholic spirit of the English Church, professed themselves its ministers for the sake of temporalities, lavished on them in return for the support which they rendered to a corrupt party—a party, which, while with one foot it trampled on the Crown, set the other upon the liberties of the people, and whose especial malignity was directed against the Church, conscious as they were that, by its very nature and institutions, it was calculated and meant to be the truest friend of both. Such, too, were the men in whom Sir Andrew Luntley found supporters; for the system by which his wealth was amassed lay near to their hearts. They stigmatized the High Churchman and the Tory with the names of Papist and Jacobite—though the term of Papist was, politically speaking, without a meaning; for so miserably had the unfortunate members of the Church of Rome been crushed by the Whigs, that they were absolutely innocuous, and submitted with meanness to their fate.

Croxall meanwhile preserved a silence which was to his companion exceedingly provoking; for it forced him to speak of his own immediate purpose. “You!” he resumed, “dear and reverend friend, will, I am full sure, perceive how important it would be to the cause of true liberty and religion, in this neighbourhood, if we would for ever crush one who contends so strongly for the follies and abuses of the old time as this Squire of Draycot: doth he not encourage Popery and idleness among the people—Christmas, and May sports, and the keeping forsooth of saints’ days? But we have him, we have him now on the hip. We have him now, fast and sure: it wanted but

the madness of this morning's sport ; it wanted but his braggart boy to strike me as he has done—strike me ! yes, you saw him, Croxall, strike me like his hounds—I will have his blood, his heart's blood, for it yet !”

“ I should not have thought thou hadst been so imprudent, my good friend, Sir Andrew, as to put thy very valuable life upon the chances of a duel with a hot-headed boy,” said Croxall ; adding drily, “ Pshaw, let the law deal with his misdemeanor !”

One of those fearful smiles for which Sir Andrew was remarkable hovered on his lip for a moment while Croxall spoke ; but it briefly died away, and, leaning forwards, with a dark scowl, he said, “ Mistake me not, or know me better, Dr. Croxall : the law *shall* deal with him—the law with its harrowing process, that withers old hearts, and quickly drains the life and hope from young ones : the law shall dry up Harry Draycot's blood, if it bring not his neck into the traitor's halter. And for his father, oh, oh, he doeth well, the champion for twenty lawsuits ; let him, if his ruin wants to be more securely sealed, claim for some Papist heir the broad lands of Rodenhurst. So, so, our ministers, who love Oxford so well, will surely lean towards the good Squire, even for the courteous terms which he hath in public flung upon their reception of the address of that right wise and learned University !”

There was that in this speech which awakened Croxall to a somewhat more lively attention than he had yet shown ; and, with an eager curiosity, he said, “ But I knew not that any one lived who might claim to be heir of Rodenhurst after the death of thy lady !”

“ Nay,” returned Luntley, something of the dark colour natural to him deepening on his cheek, while with an eye as if he watched the effect of his words, and the amount of credence which they received, he spoke to the rector—“ nay, when I wedded Deva Mandeville, she had a brother—a wild and graceless youth he was, ever planting thorns in his good father's heart ; before Deva became my wife, he had been long held as

an outcast from the family, and he died in less than six weeks after our marriage."

"And I think I have heard that the elder Mr. Mandeville did not long outlive the espousals of his daughter?" said Croxall.

"Truly!" replied Sir Andrew; "he barely survived to witness their completion; his health had been long declining, and he wished to place Deva and her wealth in trusty hands, for he had already secured to her all his alienable property."

"He feared, then, I suppose, to leave her exposed to the violence of her brother?" remarked the rector.

"Even so," answered Sir Andrew.

"Yet," returned Croxall, "either report belied her much, or that lady was no less haughty than beautiful: I have ever heard of her as one with an unflinching spirit, and likely to assert her own rights, and in faith I could have sworn that she would bear out the report. I slightly knew Deva Mandeville during a short stay which she made in London some time before her marriage; a Juno she was, for beauty and for pride!"

"Yes, Deva was both beautiful and proud," replied Luntley; "but, my friend, even she would have been unequal to contend as a single woman against the violence and rapacity of Gerald Mandeville, who forsooth chose always to imagine that the malice of Deva had closed his father's heart against him, when in truth it was closed by his own evil ways."

"Was there, then," said Croxall, "any large portion of the estates which Mr. Mandeville was unable to alienate from his son?"

"Certainly," answered Sir Andrew; "the mansion of Rodenhurst, and the large estate belonging to it, could not be made over to Deva during the life of her brother, or his heirs. On his death that property also of course fell to Deva; and by her Will, no less than by a natural right, it became mine after her own decease; for you are, I believe, aware that I lost my beautiful Deva when she had been scarcely two years my wife."

"Did she die so soon?" said Croxall: "thou hast been unfortunate in thy connexions with the family of Mandeville!"

"I think not so, all things considered," returned Sir Andrew, with a slight smile.

"Then it may have been they were unfortunate in their connexion with thee," observed the rector, drily.

A dark frown lowered on the brow of the Baronet at this remark; but, quickly recovering his self-possession, he said with a cold air, "I was no worker of miracles, my friend, to defraud death of his victims: all that art could do was done in behalf of poor Deva."

A slight pause succeeded these words of Sir Andrew. It was broken by the rector: "But thou," he remarked, "saidst something of a Catholic heir to Rodenhurst, to be supported by the Squire of Draycot: through what branch of the Mandevilles can he affect to make such a pretension? I had thought that the family was quite extinct."

"I was about to say, but you interrupted me with questions foreign to the point," answered Sir Andrew, "that during my addresses to Deva I heard something of a wild connexion formed by her brother, which had more than all else estranged from him his father's heart: and well might it be so; for this girl, this light o' love, came of Papist breed; and the elder Mandeville had a due and pious horror of the Pope!"

"Had Gerald Mandeville, then, made this girl his wife?" inquired Croxall.

Sir Andrew looked steadily at the rector ere he replied to this question. Then he said—"It was even about this matter I made bold to send for thee to-night, when only under a suspicion, which has been since confirmed, that the Squire of Draycot sought to palm upon the world the nameless child of Gerald Mandeville as the lawful heiress of Rodenhurst!"

"Then a child of Gerald Mandeville really lives?" said Croxall.

"Yes, yes, it would so seem," replied the Baronet, with an air more uneasy than he would have willed to exhibit.

"But he was never married to the mother," pursued the pertinacious rector, who seemed to have no idea of sparing the nice feelings of his friend.

"Yes," answered Luntley; "Emma Frankley was certainly the wife of Gerald Mandeville; they had unquestionably been married, but married by one of the outlawed priests of her own faith—a fellow upon whose neck I would even now fix a halter for his pains, could I catch him. But this marriage—this marriage, I think, though its certificate be produced, will scarce secure for the child of Emma Frankley the estate of the Mandevilles!"

"Surely not," answered Croxall, "for in the eye of the law it is no marriage!"

"But," interrupted Sir Andrew, "something was said at Rodenhurst of a poor young curate, one at that time under the domination of our pious friend, Francis Blackburne—who had been weak enough, with a knowledge of the prejudices of his superior staring full in his face, to unite in marriage the hand of the Protestant heir to a rich estate, Gerald Mandeville, to that of the Catholic Emma Frankley!"

"Is that all?" demanded Croxall; for here Sir Andrew paused.

"It would not have been well," said the Baronet, "if the lands of Rodenhurst had fallen, on the sudden deaths of Squire Mandeville and his son, to an infant whose mother would have educated it in the precepts of her own idolatry, with a love of the Pope, and a leaning to the cause of the Pretender! The fairer and richer an estate, the better is it that it should have for its owner one whose very existence is bound up in the Protestant succession, who is determined to stand or fall by that. Is it not better these things should be so?"

"I do not gainsay thee!" answered Croxall, "it is better!"

"Well was it, then," replied Sir Andrew, "that it received little credence—a romantic story which was afloat at Ro-

denhurst a few months after Gerald Mandeville's death, of a stranger who one evening visited the curate who was said to have performed the marriage ceremony betwixt the heir of the manor and Emma Frankley; and who, demanding to see the register of that marriage, before the curate's face tore it boldly from the parish books!"

"Thou mayest say boldly, my friend," said Croxall—"that was in sooth a bold deed: I would fain know how the stranger answered for it to the curate?"

"In words as bold as the deed," answered Sir Andrew: "he bade him own to his vicar, Francis Blackburne, that he had privately, and in the teeth of his and of the general hatred to the Catholics, united Emma Frankley to her lover: he reminded him of the odium he would incur when this should be known; he reminded him also of his wife and three children, dependent only on his scanty means, and of the obstacles which a deeply offended superior easily might, and in this case infallibly would, raise in the way of his preferment; he boldly avowed his name and his own intents, and bade the curate appeal against him, if he willed, to the Bishop of his diocese, Doctor Hoadley, and point out, to prove the marriage which he ought never to have performed, the discrepancy which the missing leaf would occasion in the book of registers!"

"And how acted the curate upon this?" inquired Croxall.

"Even as a dainty fool of conscience," answered Sir Andrew: "he looked like one aghast, and spoke as though the eternal judgment had been already pronounced, and a doom had fallen on his soul. The ties of nature were strong upon him, and he hesitated to consign to utter destruction that wife and those babes who were after all the only solace of his sordid lot. Yet did he balance awhile between the sacrifice of these dear beings and what he called his conscience!"

"And how, I pray you, did the stranger treat these doubts and fears upon the curate's part?" inquired Croxall.

"Truly!" answered Sir Andrew, "the one witness who was present said that he bargained with a skill worthy of the devil

for the curate's soul : he spoke of the comfort which he would be the means of securing to him henceforth, of the ease with which the subtraction of the leaf might be concealed—in short, he palliated or laughed at the young man's fears."

"But how ended this interview on the curate's part?" asked Croxall.

"The stranger," replied Sir Andrew, "left him yielding, but not convinced, dragged into, but not consenting, to what he thought a sin; the certificate, however, remained in the stranger's possession."

"But had not this Emma Frankley a copy?" said Croxall.

"That had been cared for," answered Sir Andrew.

"But how ended the affair?" pursued Croxall.

"For years," said Sir Andrew, in a hollow tone, "the stranger thought that child was dead. In that thought, too, was the curate reconciled to the wrong which he had done; his path parted from that of the stranger, and they knew each other no more. But the child cometh again like one arisen from the grave: assuredly, Sybil Mandeville, whom the Squire of Draycot has this night presented to his friends, is that child; and as surely is she the same maiden whom we met this morning in company with that old friend of thine, Croxall."

A pause ensued after Sir Andrew spoke thus, and he sank heavily back upon the sofa; for, unwell as he really was, the excitement of his mind quickly exhausted him; he leaned then with his head upon his hand for some minutes, narrowly watching the countenance of Croxall. Whatever might be the thoughts of the latter, they had not an index in his face; and it was with a tone of sufficient indifference that, after some minutes, he only remarked, "This is a strange tale!"

"But only a tale," replied Sir Andrew, with peculiar meaning; "mere words, you know, Dr. Croxall, without a proof, and which might be recanted at pleasure; for I think it would be difficult for other than the stranger, supposing the story to be a true one, to discover this curate, since he only is acquainted with his name."

"But, on the publication of the strange story of this Sybil Mandeville," said Croxall, "is it not possible he will voluntarily come forward to repair the wrong to which he formerly submitted?"

"I think not," answered Sir Andrew; "upon consideration, Dr. Croxall, you will find that his position is something worse than in the former instance: he first violated the dictates of prudence in privately uniting a Churchman to a Papist; and then, to conceal his error, suffered, and partly assisted, in a gross fraud. There is a strong doubt, too, even as to whether the man yet lives, nor must we forget that the lapse of twenty years has scarce amended the condition of the Papists: a case so intricate should surely go hard with them. And is this a time, too, when they will find it easy to support a claim set up against a true servant of the House of Hanover, when the country has scarce breathed from its just resistance against a Popish Pretender to its crown? Surely, in common justice, the Government should look to its own interests in that of its true servants, and very narrowly watch the proceedings of such men as our Squire of Draycot. What is there more natural to suppose, than that one so full of prejudice would support the claim of a suppositious or illegitimate child against a man whom he hates as being a true servant of the Government?"

"Nothing, certainly, could be more natural," answered Croxall.

"And nothing more easy than to discover, through Blackburne or Hoadley, whether the silly curate still lives?" said Sir Andrew.

"Nothing either more easy or desirable," replied the rector.

"And for this friend of thine, who was in company with the pretended heiress, what sort of man may he be?" said Luntley.

"A sort of monk, if a tale which met my ears some years ago be true," answered Croxall.

"A monk!" exclaimed Sir Andrew eagerly; "ah! be thou but sure of that, Croxall, and his life is not worth a fortnight's purchase."

"Fair and softly, good Sir Andrew!" returned Croxall; "'tis not altogether so easy to be sure: a man is in general extremely careful of secrets upon which the safety of his neck depends; nor would I twist a halter for Robert Lawson's, be he priest or layman; my dear Sir Andrew, you are too much like the Squire of Draycot himself, a vast deal too hot in your hatreds. Thou hast certainly laid a most admirable snare for the Draycots, into which they, good simple souls, rush head-long; but when thou hast them so fast that thou canst hang them on a charge of treason, or bring them to a gaol by process of the law, and hast got, besides, the land of this little heiress in thy possession, thou mightst surely be content, and spare poor Lawson, who, from what he has said to me to-night, seems only to be a very crazed antiquarian. If he be a monk, thou mayst find the proofs thyself, for I will not trouble my head about the matter. Thou hast the most prodigious stomach for oppression of any man I ever knew, save and except always thy worshipful servant the lawyer, Master Simon Turner, of whom I would have thee beware that he do not outstrip even the law in the strength of his rascalities!"

"And, if he do, he may suffer," answered Sir Andrew, gloomily; "what care I if he be hanged to-morrow, so he answers my purpose to-day? Look you, 'twas an arrant trespass which he committed on the lands of that villain, Ashley, who forsooth chose to relinquish his farm on my estate to take one of old Draycot, and passed his strictures to my face, because I denied to the poor the right of cutting turf off my portion of the common, or picking sticks in my copse; this Turner, I say, committed me a trespass upon Ashley's land; but, had not the Squire paid the costs of the suit, the farmer had been ruined: look you, then, if Turner had not been what thou callest strong in rascality, both the Farmer and the Squire had escaped. But now, my good rector," continued Sir Andrew, with an assumed smile, "I trust thou art fully convinced how ill it would be for this Sybil Mandeville to possess the Manor of Rodenhurst!"

"Truly, it were not desirable!" answered Croxall, "nor will

it be for her very easy to make her claim good ; I blame thee not in that affair, Luntley ; but take my advice—press not matters too much upon the Squire, at least till the Earl of Aumerle be gone from Draycot !”

To this remark Luntley made no reply, begging merely that, as his friend, Croxall would endeavour to learn from Lawson what hopes her friends entertained in the cause of Sybil Mandeville.

To this the rector readily assented, and, having partaken of some refreshment, departed from the Hall.

CHAPTER VI.

“ Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do fail : and that should teach us
There is a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will !”

HAMLET.

It was the morning after the fox hunt, that Sybil Mandeville with her friends, Lawson and Alice, the Squire of Draycot with his sister, his son, and his principal guests, were assembled in the large old library of the Manor House.

An anxious, if not a dispirited look, was observable in the intelligent countenance of Sybil, who stood leaning on the back of the chair on which Alice Morland sat : her eyes fell on that beloved friend, and then wandered to the features of Lawson ; something seemed struggling at the heart of Sybil, for tears rose into her eyes, and her cheek verged rapidly from red to pale. It was hard to resign an honourable and long-cherished hope, but harder to involve those tried friends in difficulty and danger ; and such, the conversation which had that morning passed in the library had convinced Sybil, would certainly attend Lawson, and probably Alice too, in the attempt to reinstate her in those rights of her birth of which she had been so long deprived by Sir Andrew Luntley. The struggle, though brief, was

indeed hard; for most truly had Sybil said that her mother's fame was dearer to her heart than the recovery of those rich lands of which she had been deprived; but her's was not the mind to shrink from self-sacrifice: the lessons of the noble-minded Alice Morland had been well bestowed; and, stepping more forwards in the circle of her new-found, but true-hearted friends, Sybil fondly clasped the hand of her early protectress, and, turning towards Mr. Draycot, exclaimed, "Let it suffice, good Sir; let this discussion be carried no further; it is enough that I find there is so little chance for my fortunes, unless Mr. Lawson exposes himself in my behalf to an imminent danger; alas! will England for ever thus treat the children of her ancient faith?"

"Your fears, my child," said Mr. Curzon, the Earl of Aumerle's chaplain—who had watched with an air of deep interest the animated countenance of Sybil—"lead you somewhat to exaggerate the peril of your friend: Sir Andrew, it is true, is powerful; his cause will be strong among the bad, but there is a power to protect, stronger than is that of the wicked to injure. Much depends upon whether this unhappy man Wilson still lives; but to discover him will be no easy task, since he has been so long removed from the parish of which he was curate at the time when he married your parents."

"I blame myself," said Father Lawson, "that I did not at any risk procure an official authority to detain at Llewenge till the return of Alice the man who gave to Sybil and myself so much strange information: for, even had he then denied his tale, we might yet have discovered if he were not that La Roche, of whom, as the attendant of Sir Andrew, Alice knew so much ill twenty years ago."

"Was it not by accident, Mr. Lawson, that this man fell in your way?" inquired the Earl of Aumerle.

"I will not call it so, my Lord," replied Lawson, "rather did it appear to me one of those portentous events which, while we give to them the title of a chance, are in truth effected by the strict interposition of a Divine wisdom: surely it was such an interposition which led me, with Sybil, to seek shelter from

a passing storm in the miserable hovel where La Roche, if it were indeed he, lay sick of a fever which had seized him suddenly, while traversing the lonely district in which we lived. A common humanity dictated his removal from that wretched abode, and the tenderness with which Sybil sought to wile away for him the weary hours of his sickness seemed to have an influence even on his evil heart. Full of dark and bitter thoughts, it was seeking revenge, rather than justice—less desirous to restore the wronged heiress, than to destroy the guilty Baronet. A cunning, cautious care for self, too, was visible even amid the keenest outpourings of his remorse: throughout his illness I had observed his eager, anxious looks at Sybil, his curious inquiries as to her birth; and he owned to me afterwards, that her extraordinary resemblance to her father struck deep into his heart. Yet when did he make these disclosures? The night only before his departure—giving me, indeed, a statement in writing of the fraud by which Sir Andrew had possessed himself of the marriage certificate of Emma Frankley, yet withholding his own name, threatening me that if, in that stage of his disclosures, I pressed an inquiry as to who he was, he would at once desert Sybil's cause, and leave me to recover as I best might the lands of Rodenhurst from Sir Andrew Luntley. Then, promising that he would if possible obtain from the Baronet the stolen certificate, he advised me to depart with all speed from Llewenge, and endeavour among the relations of her mother, or her father's friends, to find some person who would undertake poor Sybil's cause; and any fresh and more essential information which he might obtain, he would forward to me, at Llewenge. A year has, however, now passed, and we have heard from him no more; during which time we have wandered from place to place, and in vain appealed to her mother's relations, and the principal Catholic families, in Sybil's behalf—the recreants to honour, and the dignity of their faith!"

"Nay, good father," interposed Alice, a slight flush deepening upon her cheek, "we will yet hope there are generosity and good faith among the children of the Church, though it hath not been

our hap to find it. And in future I will hold my penetration high in mine own conceit: surely, ere we departed from Llewenge, I told thee what offices of kindness our Sybil might expect from her uncle, Richard Frankley—he who stood calmly by to see his sister and her babe turned on a bitter winter night to perish on a wild moor: oh, as I then told him, he had his father in his heart. It was not, I believe in my soul, as I then told them, that they deemed my dear unhappy mistress guilty, that they thought she had not been the wife of Gerald Mandeville; but he was dead, and she was wronged and poor, and they thought of the Earl's coronet which she had refused.”

“And you, dear Alice!” said Sybil, bending down, and kissing the brow of her early friend—“you gave to my poor mother that shelter which my cruel grandfather denied her in her worst distress!”

“Name not that, mine own child,” replied Alice: “my fathers served the Frankleys for five hundred years; what was it, then, that I should give shelter to a daughter of their house—to my foster-sister, the sweet Emma, whose friendship had bestowed on me so many advantages of education beyond my sphere? Oh! it was nothing to receive her as I did!”

“And was it nothing, Alice,” returned Sybil, “for you, a lone widow, with none to stretch a hand to aid in your endeavours, to toil night and day to support my poor mother through the long and sad illness which preceded her death?”

“Oh, dear ladies!” pursued Sybil, addressing herself to Miss Draycot and the Lady Anne, “you know not how noble a creature is Alice Morland; oh! if I have a comfort in this world, or a hope in the next, it is to her I owe it. Ah! dear Alice, if I had ten times the lands of Rodenhurst, how should I repay her—am I not her debtor for subsistence, education, aye, for life itself!”

“I shall be repaid, dear child!” said Alice, “when I once behold thee the lady of thine own land! But enough of this: I would tell my lord, and these generous gentlemen, that the account which you and our good Father Lawson gave of the

sick stranger whom you protected while I was so unfortunately absent from Llewenge, agrees but too well with my memory of Philip La Roche to admit of a doubt on my mind that it was indeed he, such as he was while working evil at the command of Sir Andrew Luntley and Deva Mandeville !”

“That Deva Mandeville was a lady of haughty spirit, was she not, Mistress Morland ?” said Lord Fitzwarine, who had hitherto listened in silence to the tale of Sybil’s early life.

“That she was indeed, my Lord,” replied Alice Morland ; “and, I have ever thought, had with Sir Andrew a chief share in those plots which drove my gentle mistress out of life.”

“Strange,” remarked the Earl, “that one so proud of birth as Deva Mandeville should have given her hand, her beauty, and her wealth, to the low-born Luntley !”

“So please you, my Lord,” said Alice, “to remember that the mother of Deva Mandeville was not a woman of birth ; she was but the pretty daughter of a citizen, I was told, whom the elder Mandeville foolishly married after the death of his first wife. Deva was but the half-sister of Gerald Mandeville ; no blood of her mother is in my Sybil’s veins !” said Alice, fondly passing her hand over the dark locks of her adopted child.

The boast, however, told upon the mind of the Earl of Aumerle, whose foible was his pride of birth.

“Deva Mandeville had ever an ill-repute,” he said.

“Scarce could she have one so ill as she deserved,” answered Alice : “oh, my Lord, she was a fearful woman—beautiful as an angel, and, in my soul I believe, as wicked as a fiend. Never shall I forget the one visit which I paid with my wronged mistress to Rodenhurst. Your Lordship is, perhaps, aware that, by a strange fatality, Gerald Mandeville and his father died within a week of each other : business had led Sybil’s father into Scotland, and the packet in which he embarked was wrecked ; upon the coast many bodies were found, but never that of Gerald Mandeville. The week that brought this ill news witnessed also the death of the elder Mandeville. Distracted at the loss of her husband, my beloved mistress yet felt, on hearing of his father’s

death, that the duty which she owed her child demanded her presence immediately at Rodenhurst. Ill then as she was, she left London, where she had resided since her unfortunate marriage, and, accompanied only by myself and her babe, travelled night and day till she reached Rodenhurst. It was on the evening before the day appointed for the interment of the Squire that we arrived: the beauty and distress of Mrs. Mandeville touched the hearts of the people at the little inn of Rodenhurst; and, when they learned that she was the widow of Gerald, they prayed her to forbear her projected visit to the Manor House. Alas! the events of that terrible evening are so indelibly impressed on my memory, that the words even in which the kind landlord and his wife besought us to forbear crossing the path of Deva are yet fresh, as though I had heard them but yesterday: the urgency of their entreaties at last excited my alarm, and still more the mysterious air with which the landlady beckoned me apart from Emma. Then it was I heard, with equal astonishment and horror, that, immediately on her father's death, Deva and her new-made husband, Andrew Luntley, had proclaimed themselves as lord and lady of the Manor—boldly asserting that my mistress had never been the wife of Gerald Mandeville. This falsehood I treated at the moment with contempt, as a piece of vain malice, but my heart sank, when, on returning to my mistress, I found that she had not in her own possession a copy of the certificate of her marriage, that important document having been by her placed in her husband's charge. 'And alas, Alice,' she said, her lip growing yet paler—for she had caught the infection of my fears, even though the slander of her sister-in-law was yet unknown to her—'Alas! Alice,' she said, 'I do fear that the casket which contained that paper was by mischance packed in the trunk which my dear Gerald took with him on his fatal journey: but yet, my own Alice,' she continued—'yet, if even that copy were unfortunately lost, yet must my own honour and the birthright of my child be safe: an application to the curate of B—— will at any time establish my marriage.'

“Still, in spite of the entreaties which I myself now added to those of the village innkeepers, my mistress resolved on visiting the Manor House that very night ; then, fearful of the insults to which she might be subjected, I told her what an evil report had been spread by Deva and her husband. Never shall I forget the air of frightful calmness which Mrs. Mandeville assumed on hearing the audacious falsehood which her foes had ventured : ‘I thank you, dear Alice,’ she said ; ‘you did well to tell me all the truth ; it is indeed necessary that I forthwith appear at the Manor of Rodenhurst !’

“‘But surely, surely, Emma,’ I said, ‘you will not now think of approaching the presence of Deva Mandeville and her husband, who thus openly avow their intent of plundering your child !’

“‘And surely, Alice,’ she replied, ‘there is even more reason now that I should boldly and at once face these desperate enemies, whose stabs have hitherto been dealt only in the dark. Yes, I will see them this night—I will learn how far they are prepared to support their calumnies ; you, Alice, my own sister, my more than sister, you will not desert me now : come with me, Alice, to the Manor House, and bring my precious Sybil in your arms !’

“There was something even in the calmness of Emma’s manner, as she spoke thus, which alarmed me : she paced across the room with so firm a step ; her voice, too, was so clear ; and her lip and cheek so deadly, ghastly pale. Finding her thus determined, I was fain to yield ; and, oh ! how my heart throbbed, as the post carriage which had brought us to the village rolled through the ancient park of Rodenhurst. It was the first time that Mrs. Mandeville had visited her husband’s birthplace ; it was long, indeed, since Gerald had himself been there ; for, even before his acquaintance with Emma Frankley, his envious and avaricious sister had so worked upon the mind of the elder Mandeville by her misrepresentations of some youthful follies on the part of his son, that he had been forbidden to appear at Rodenhurst.

“It was a lovely summer evening, and the rich rays of the

setting sun slanted in long lines through the avenues of the spacious park, and touched with a crimson colour the closed windows of the Manor House. Not a word was spoken by my poor friend on our way thither; but more than once, as her eyes fell on the rich lands through which we were passing, or she caught through the trees a glimpse of the Manor House—the mansion, by good right, of her babe's inheritance—she turned away, and, looking at the infant, breathed a deep convulsive sigh. On arriving at the mansion, she demanded to see Mrs. Luntley, announcing herself as the widow of the shipwrecked Gerald Mandeville, the last Lord of the Manor of Rodenhurst. The aged servant to whom Emma spoke fixed upon her what seemed to me an eye of pity; and then, ushering us into a private room, he prayed her for her own sake to avoid the presence of his mistress. ‘Dear lady,’ he said, ‘it would be as much as my place is worth to speak of you to Mistress Deva as the widow of her brother: wait, I beseech you, till the law has ascertained your right; wait till you can command Luntley and his wife to leave the house which you will hold in trust for your infant daughter; oh, Madam,’ he continued, ‘believe me that I dearly loved Mr. Gerald; then, for his child's sake, I implore you to avoid his false sister, and the false man to whom she is allied.’

“‘My friend,’ returned Emma, calmly, ‘I question not your regard for my dear husband, and I would not that, old and infirm as you are, you should risk being turned by Deva Luntley from the house which has sheltered you so long. But another course than that which you recommend must be mine: it seems not the widow of Gerald Mandeville, the mother of the heiress of Rodenhurst, to shrink from facing a worthless woman, or a false, intriguing man: come with me, Alice,’ she continued; ‘let us see if we cannot find our own way to this would-be lady of the manor!’”

“With these words, Emma was about to quit the apartment; but the aged servant interposed—‘No, Madam,’ he cried, ‘if you are so determined, it shall not be said that Ambrose Warner deserted the cause of his dear young master's child.’”

“ So saying, the old man opened the door, and, conducting us through the great hall, led the way into a long gallery, towards the apartments which he said were occupied by Mrs. Luntley. It was a stately gallery, with other narrower corridors branching off from it on either side, or doors which, standing open, discovered long suites of magnificent apartments ; on the panels of the oak wainscot hung many a portrait of the dead worthies of the house of Mandeville. The roof, too, of that gallery was of oak, quaintly carved ; and curious traceries, too, were on the panelings of the doors, and round the tall Gothic windows. I noticed these particulars ; for my mind was less occupied by a bitterness of distress than that of Emma, and my eyes wandered curiously over the abode of which the malice of her enemies had robbed her child. At the end of this gallery, an immense window, extending from the ceiling to the floor, was filled with the richest stained glass ; and the full splendour of the setting sun, pouring through it, cast a halo of bright colours—saffron, violet, crimson, and green—upon the oak flooring and the opposite wainscot ; a long line of purple-looking light darting from one particular pane towards what appeared to be an open doorway. Ere, however, we reached that spot, old Ambrose paused near a Gothic arch sunk slightly in the wall ; within its span appeared a pair of massive folding doors.

“ ‘ Think once more, dear lady ! ’ he said in a low tone, ‘ these apartments, which I am now about to enter, are occupied by Mistress Deva ; it seems to me that you are ill prepared to encounter her violence ; sweet lady, be persuaded—indeed, you know her not.’

“ My mistress replied only by an impatient gesture, and waved her hand for Ambrose to open the door, which was no sooner done than a sudden exclamation burst from the upper end of the gallery ; and, turning hastily at the sound, we perceived a man standing, as if transfixed by astonishment, near to the painted window, and full in that line of purple light which I had before noticed. It might be that peculiar light which communicated to his features their livid and horrible paleness ;

but it could not have influenced the starting eye and quivering lip which he turned towards my mistress. She, on her part, the moment that she beheld him, sprang forwards with a shriek of joy, exclaiming, 'Oh, who shall now bid me from my Sybil's house? Philip La Roche, you were witness that I was the wife of my dear Gerald!'

"The seeming surprise of La Roche had kept him rooted to the spot where we first beheld him, till Emma had rushed forwards, and clasped his hand, when, exclaiming in a harsh tone that he knew her not, he flung her rudely back; and, darting down the gallery, he burst open the folding doors, and passed through, clapping them violently behind him. Oh! never shall I forget the look of my mistress at that moment: despair seemed to have set his iron seal upon her brow, as she stood with clasped hands, gazing, in a stupefaction of horror, towards the spot in which he had disappeared who had thus wrecked her last hope; while the good Ambrose wrung his hands, and, turning towards me, cried, in a tone smothered by his tears, 'Ah, Madam, if Mrs. Mandeville builds a hope upon Philip La Roche, it has, indeed, an unsure foundation; for that villain has long been sold to the interests of Deva and Andrew Luntley: oh, why—why did Mr. Gerald disregard my warning—why did he trust that man!'

"The loud and sudden clapping of the heavy folding doors awoke poor Sybil, who had slept soundly in my arms since we had entered the house, and, startled by the noise, she cried violently. The sound of her infant's voice seemed to recall the lost energy of the unfortunate Emma; and, coming hastily forwards, she snatched it from my arms, and, lulling its cries upon her bosom, she exclaimed, 'Lead, lead the way, good Ambrose; if ever Gerald Mandeville was dear to thee, let me know at once what web entangles the fortunes of his innocent child: let me face her foes, and know the worst at once.'

"Old Ambrose, who seemed startled by the appearance of La Roche into a more prompt action, said, hastily, 'Follow me, Madam: if you object not to pass through the chamber in which lies the body of your father-in-law, I can more speedily convey you to the presence of Mistress Deva!'

“ ‘I shall heed not that,’ replied Emma, in an agitated tone ; ‘I fear not the dead, unjust though they may have been in life ; who shall say what judgment has ere this been pronounced between Mr. Mandeville and his son ? But, oh, my child, my child, it is the living whom I fear for thee !’

“ With these words, Emma turned to follow the old servant in the direction which he pursued up the gallery ; shocked, however, by her pale, distracted looks, I again took the infant, which was now quiet, from her arms.

“ Ambrose turned from the gallery into a long and narrow passage, obscurely lighted by a single lamp ; this he trod with hurried steps, but paused, as he laid his hand upon the handle of a door at its close, ‘Bear up, Madam,’ he cried ; ‘Mr. Mandeville lies in this room, and his daughter sits in an apartment two chambers beyond it !’

“ Emma made no reply, she motioned for him to open the door ; but even in that dim light I could perceive that she was deadly pale, and shivering from strong excitement. The next moment we stood in the chamber of death.

“ It was a spacious and lofty room in which lay the departed Lord of the Manor, the walls were hung with black draperies, and curtains of the same hue were suspended over the deep recesses of the windows, save one at the remote end of the room, which, like that in the gallery, was filled with stained glass ; this window was uncurtained, and dimly through it I could see the tall trees waving in the park, while the faint glow of glorious colours which the rich glass caught from the light of the declining sun contrasted with the sickly glimmering of the wax tapers which stood around the canopied and plumed bier which supported the coffin of Mr. Mandeville. The pall, emblazoned with his armorial bearings, descended in massive folds to the ground, and the outline only of the lower part of the coffin was visible ; about the shoulders, however, the pall was turned down, and, the coffin lid being partly drawn aside, left exposed the still and marble features of the dead. Emma rushed forwards, and, overcome and half maddened by her horror and distress,

placed her hand upon the cold breast, and cried, 'Oh, thou who wast in life alike deaf to the cries of justice and of nature, if the penalty of that sin press hard upon thee now, be like the dead of old, and give a sign, a token to those who, like thee, pursue the path of cruelty and injustice; let them know what rewards await the hard of heart, and that those who forgive not shall never be forgiven!'

"As Emma uttered these words, in the loud tone dictated by her grief and her despair, a shriek was heard in an adjoining apartment, and, a door opposite the left hand of the bier bursting open, a tall and beautiful woman, attired in deep mourning robes, stood before us. I knew at a glance that it was she who had been Deva Mandeville—none other could have shone even amid the confusion and horror of that moment in such excelling beauty. The fierce glance of the large blue eye, the frown upon the brow, the curl of the pale lip, the majestic figure, strained even beyond its usual height, presented but the idea of a scathed archangel.

"But, if the darker passions of Deva Mandeville were in that fearful hour legibly written in her face, her luxury was no less apparent in the sumptuousness of those robes of affected sorrow which she wore. Her hair, which swept over her shoulders, and fell in large yellow rings far below her waist, was bound back from her bold and beautiful forehead by a fillet of most costly diamonds, bracelets of the same gems were on her arms, and knots of diamonds confined the drapery on different parts of her dress. On perceiving Emma, she darted forwards, and, dragging her from the side of the bier, held her at arm's length while she fiercely exclaimed, 'Who, who art thou—who forsooth must fix Heaven's judgment, and invoke the dead to break, in thy behalf, the blessed quiet of their last long sleep?'

"Tottering with illness, almost spent with grief, my poor friend was but ill fitted to contend with a woman in the full glow of health, and whose frame was no less powerful than finely formed; Emma then shook like an aspen leaf in the strong grasp which her sister-in-law had laid upon her arm; but, though

sick, wearied, and worn down with sorrow, she bore herself even in that bitter moment as became a daughter of her own house, the mother of the rightful heiress of Rodenhurst; and, firmly raising her eyes to the countenance of her oppressor, she proclaimed herself the widow of Gerald Mandeville.

“For a moment I could perceive that the hand of Deva tightened, and an expression of ungovernable rage distorted her features: then, as if under the impulse of some sudden thought, she dropped the arm of my mistress, and, in a tone the very calmness of which contrasted frightfully with her late violence, bade her follow her into another apartment: at a sign from Mrs. Mandeville, I then approached; but the haughty Deva waved me back, refusing to admit any person to be present at her interview with Emma. ‘Alice Morland is my dearest friend, Madam,’ said the latter; ‘she is no stranger either to my trials, or my griefs, be you prepared to receive your infant niece with the affection due towards an innocent babe so nearly allied to you in blood, or to refuse her an admittance to that dwelling which is of right her own, still may Alice Morland be present at our meeting; for, as I but just said, she is no stranger either to my sufferings or my wrongs.’

“‘As you will, Madam,’ replied Deva, who had shaken off the agitation which it would seem the despairing exclamations of her sister-in-law had caused—‘as you will; but I admit not to my presence the menial whom it may befit Emma Frankley to take to her bosom as a friend; the time may come when you will regret for your infant’s sake that you pressed so unbecoming a demand.’

“Deva then turned coldly towards the apartment which she had just quitted, the door of which still stood open; poor Emma on her part paused, and, clasping her hands, looked towards me with a doubtful air; I could plainly perceive that, sinking as she was, she dreaded unsupported and alone to encounter the fierce passions of Deva Luntley: for myself, I dared not utter a word. I wished not to shrink from the side of my friend, but I feared that she must at once quit the Manor House, or accede to the

requisition of Deva. That advice, however, which I hesitated to offer, was proffered by the aged Ambrose: 'Dear lady,' he whispered, as the tall form of Deva glided through the open door, 'follow her—follow her, if you love your babe; hear but what she has to say: to-morrow she will shut you from her presence, if you refuse submission to her demands to-day.'

"Thus urged, Mrs. Mandeville hastened after Deva: the latter turned at the sound of her step, and bade Ambrose quit the apartment. 'I will think to-morrow,' she said with a bitter sneer, 'how I may best reward you for intruding a frantic woman into that chamber, which death might at least have made sacred to the oldest servant of my father's house!'

"A resigned upward look, a glance of pity towards my unhappy friend, was the only reply of the aged servitor: and then, with a head howed, and hands clasped, as if in bitter grief, he left the room: once then, before she led away my mistress, did Deva approach the open coffin of her father. I stood near it at the moment, and what thoughts were passing through her mind it would have been impossible to define; but it was a frightful sight, the spasmodic workings of her beautiful features, contrasted by the still and passionless countenance of the dead. Whatever might be the reflections of Deva, they held her but for a brief space; and, closing the coffin, she bade us follow her, and led the way into a small antechamber, adjoining the state apartment in which the corpse was laid. 'Here!' she said to me, in a haughty tone, 'you may wait while I hear what your mistress has to urge in her own behalf.' She then beckoned Emma, towards a door to the right of that by which we had entered the antechamber, and which, being half open, admitted a glimpse of another apartment; and, closing it after they had entered, I found myself alone with the infant Sybil, who had again fallen asleep. I will own that a strange fear, such as I had never known before, grew on me, as minute after minute passed away, and my mistress did not reappear: a very faint and low murmuring of voices occasionally met my ears; but I thought that I could occasionally distinguish, mingling with the

accents of Deva and Mrs. Mandeville, the harsher tones of a man. The sun, too, had now gone down, and the dull hue of the twilight was growing fainter and fainter in the small apartment which I occupied ; while, through the open doorway by which I had entered, the bier, with its coffin and sweeping pall, and the dark canopy, and nodding plumes above it, were still distinctly and awfully defined amid the fast-coming shadows of the night. As I thus surveyed the apartment, I perceived to the right of the sofa on which I sat was another door, similar to that which communicated with the chamber where Deva had led my friend : this door, without moving from my seat, I perceived opened outwards into some gallery or passage ; for a black, gloomy space was visible in a large mirror which hung opposite to that door. I cared not to move from my seat, fearing to disturb the sleeping child, else the nervous terror by which I was so unusually oppressed would have led me to explore the dark passage. Thus, however, I sat, till the moon, rising over the tall trees, that waved before the single casement of the antechamber, played upon the mirror, and, glancing also through the painted window in the apartment where the corpse was laid, cast a flickering, many-coloured light upon the bier. The heavy tongue of the old clock of the Manor House had struck nine, and still my friend did not appear, still the whispering voices in the other apartment had not ceased. Alarmed by her protracted absence, knowing as I did that she was then in the hands of her worst enemy, I at last rose, determined to hazard the displeasure of the insolent Deva, by entering unbidden the room into which she had led Mrs. Mandeville, when, chancing to raise my eyes to the mirror, I beheld there a sight which sent the blood coldly gushing round my heart with such a chill of superstitious dread as I had never before experienced. On the white polished surface of the glass, shining as it did in the clear moonlight, I beheld the figure of a man : his countenance was pale and ghastly as that of one newly risen from the grave ; his hair hung in tangled masses ; his eyes were hollow, and had a mournful look ; but I knew the face, even amid its fearful

changes; and, if ever my eyes beheld in life the form and features of Gerald Mandeville, it was his form, and his face, which for a moment darkened the bright surface of the mirror, and then vanished like the spectre of a dream!

“For a brief space I was held by an uncontrollable terror, gazing upon the smooth sheet of glass; but then, determined not to be made the dupe of an imagination which I was myself conscious might be excited by the circumstances attendant on my position at that peculiar moment, I stepped hastily through the open door opposite to the mirror into the gallery beyond. A narrow Gothic casement, placed high in the wall at its remote end, admitted the same light of the moon which so completely illumined the antechamber; and by that light I found myself alone in a straight passage of no great extent, and where, had any person been lurking at the moment, they could not have escaped my observation. So unwilling was I either to attach any superstitious import to the strange appearance which I had witnessed, or to believe that I had been the dupe of my usually cool and firm nerves, that I traversed the gallery from one end to the other, to discover if it possessed any means for so rapid an egress as must have been made by the person whose form had passed over the mirror. At the end of the gallery opposite to the casement, I did indeed find a narrow staircase, constructed apparently in the outer walls of the mansion; but, be it observed that, from the direction in which the figure passed over the glass, it must have been coming from that staircase; nor could I discover any other outlet from the gallery, save the staircase and the antechamber in which I had myself been waiting. Thus, unwillingly driven upon the belief that I was the cheat of an overwrought fancy, after a cautious examination of the gallery, I returned to the room I had left, resuming my intention of searching for Mrs. Mandeville, when a shriek, more prolonged and terrible than that which the conscience-stricken Deva had uttered when she burst that night into the presence of her wronged sister-in-law, echoed through the gallery and adjoining chambers. I knew the voice to be

that of my dear friend ; and, with not a moment's pause, I opened the door of that room into which she had been led by Deva : no one was there ; but, through a pair of half-open folding doors, I discovered several persons assembled in an inner room. On entering that room, I found that this group consisted of Andrew Luntley, his wife, and the man whom Emma had that evening addressed as Philip La Roche ; as for Mrs. Mandeville, she had fallen, apparently in a swoon, across a pile of cushions which had been heaped in the centre of the apartment. Some confusion on my entrance was perceivable among those who had laid so deep a plot to wrong the innocent ; an air of anxiety was sufficiently apparent in the air and manner of La Roche, as, raising poor Emma, he applied water and strong essences to revive her. While glancing at Luntley, I at once remarked that his dress was in disorder, and his countenance jaded, as if he had but lately finished a fatiguing journey ; considerable hurry and confusion, too, did he exhibit while hastily hiding in his bosom a gold chain, the glittering links of which attracted my attention. Deva, however, on her part, gave no sign of embarrassment ; an air of triumph alone sat on her beautiful features, as, leaning against a cabinet, she calmly watched the endeavours of La Roche to restore the unfortunate Emma. She recovered only too soon to a sense of misery so exquisite as hers. ' Alice, dear Alice !' were the first words she uttered, ' there is no hope ; take, oh, take me from this place : let me hide myself with my nameless, wretched child ! Oh, take me ; take me, Alice, where the name of Frankley was never known : never can I face my father or my brother now !'

" Alarmed by her words, I endeavoured to raise her head ; for, on recovering her consciousness, she had thrown herself on my bosom, clasping her child and myself in one agonized embrace.

" ' What mean you, dear Emma ?' I said ; ' are you not the widow of Gerald Mandeville, at this moment the rightful lady of Rodenhurst ?'

" At these words Emma raised herself, and looked distract-

edly upon the group that surrounded her ; then, bursting into a frantic laugh, she clapped her hands together, exclaiming, ' Yes, I did think myself the wife of Gerald Mandeville ; but it is not so : hark you, Alice ! ' she continued, drawing me closer to her, and speaking in a half whisper—' hark you, Alice, they say that it is not so : and he must know it, surely, he who was the one witness ; if he denies it, in sooth, Alice, I must own that I was not Gerald's wife.' As she spoke thus, she pointed to La Roche, who coldly remarked, ' Poor lady, her griefs have driven her mad : she mistakes me for some other person. Truly, I wonder not at her present condition, for I believe she comes of a right honourable family ; and the wrong which has been done her by Gerald Mandeville, his death now renders past recall ! '

" A gleam of recollection seemed to shoot athwart the mind of the ill-fated Emma, which partly gave her the meaning of this speech ; and, rising from the cushions on which she had crouched, she approached La Roche ; and, again pointing at him, ' No, no,' she cried ; ' I know you well—I mistake you not ; you are Philip La Roche, whom my poor Gerald trusted, and by whom he was betrayed ; and you know, too, that I was Gerald's wife. Yes, yes, Philip La Roche, I know you—I know you well. I know them all, Alice ! ' she continued, turning to me ; and, directing her finger towards the countenance of Luntley, ' yes, I know him, Alice ; oh, it was a cunning plot, but I can see it all now ; look at that man, Alice, and then bend down your head, and I will tell you, he is—he is—'

" What else Mrs. Mandeville might have said was here interrupted by Luntley, whose face had grown terribly pale while she spoke ; and who, now advancing, fiercely seized her by the wrists, bidding her beware how, in the frenzy of her disappointed fraud, she dared attack his character. His touch seemed to inspire the wretched Emma with an unutterable horror ; for, wrenching herself from his grasp, she clung to me, and, with lamentable screams, besought me to convey her from the sight of that man. ' See, see, Alice,' she cried, ' there is blood on

him—it has stained my garments ; oh, take me, take me, Alice, from his sight !’

“Deva now interfered, furiously demanding that her wretched sister-in-law, who had fallen in convulsions on the floor, should be forthwith conveyed from the Manor House.

“‘Madam,’ I replied, with perhaps an imprudent indignation, ‘I will remove your wronged sister-in-law from this house, as I would take her from a nest of serpents ; for no peril, I am well assured, can exceed that which she encounters when in your presence !’

“At this moment, several servants, who had been summoned by La Roche, entered the room : they were commanded by Deva to bear Mrs. Mandeville immediately from the house ; at this order more than one of them partially recoiled, for they perceived that the unhappy lady was in no condition to bear a removal ; and old Ambrose, who had entered with the rest, with tears streaming down his face, besought his mistress to yield to her victim the shelter of the Manor House only for one night. The barbarous Deva spurned at the request, and was with difficulty persuaded by her husband to allow Mrs. Mandeville to be carried into an inferior apartment till the violence of the fit under which she laboured had in some measure passed away. In a mean chamber, then, appropriated to one of the lowest servants, I watched the unhappy Emma Mandeville struggling for two hours with the most fearful convulsions. At length, however, the paroxysm passed away, and she fell into a profound torpor : while she was in this state, I ventured to have her removed into the carriage which had brought her on this fatal visit, and conveyed her to the village inn ; for I judged that, when she should recover her senses, a knowledge that she was still under the same roof with her mortal foes might well occasion a relapse. While, by the humanity of old Ambrose and some of the female servants, my poor friend was being borne to the carriage, another attendant came with a message from Mr. Luntley to myself, praying to speak with me for a moment ere I left the Manor House. It was unwillingly that I entered the

presence of the man whom I judged to be chief among the oppressors of poor Emma; but the feeble wail of the fatherless and destitute infant, whom I still held in my arms, admonished me not to shrink from a meeting with the bold and bad man, who had its fortunes so completely in his power. Luntley was awaiting me in that small apartment on the side of the entrance hall into which I had been, in company with Emma, ushered by Ambrose on our first arrival: and oh, Heaven! amid the horrors of that night the look of Luntley is not least remembered. At that period of his life he might have been termed a remarkably handsome man: such, indeed, were then his personal attractions, that the inhabitants of Rodenhurst found in them a clue to the infatuation which had induced the highborn and wealthy Deva Mandeville to bestow her hand upon the upstart citizen. To me, however, it appeared on that night as though some present and unutterable horror had power for the passing time even to blight his personal beauty, and write a curse like that of Cain upon his face. Some hideous consciousness of crime committed, or yet to be encountered, seemed brooding on his soul, and found voice in his restless eyes, his hollow, gasping accents, and his quivering lips. He beckoned me towards him, as I entered the room, with an air seemingly intended not only to be courteous, but kind: he requested me to uncover the features of the babe, admired its beauty, and affected to compassionate its fate. 'But,' he said, fixing his eyes keenly on my countenance, 'you, Mrs. Morland, must be well aware that this poor infant has no legal claim upon the name of Mandeville; you are, I am sure, too sensible, and too well judging a friend of the unfortunate Emma Frankley, to aid her in advancing pretensions alike ruinous and absurd; you will, I am sure, advise her to attend to the more solid interests of her infant, and, resigning for ever all claim to the name and the estate of Mandeville, accept for the child that provision which both I and Mrs. Luntley are well disposed to make for the illegitimate daughter of Gerald Mandeville: you, I am sure, Mrs. Morland, will think over all this, and advise your friend for the wisest course!'

"I will, indeed, advise her for the wisest course, Mr. Luntley," I replied; "I will advise her rather to teach her child to support itself by a toil such as the meanest peasant on its own land would shrink from, than buy the world's luxuries at the price of an honourable name. Mr. Luntley, this child, as you well know, is the heiress of Rodenhurst, and its mother an honourable wife."

"I know no such thing, Mrs. Morland," answered Luntley; but his tone was less assured than when he first spoke; and I perceived that he had been trying my confidence in the integrity of my friend. At that moment, La Roche entered the room, to say that Miss Frankley (thus had he the assurance to term the woman whose marriage he had witnessed)—that Miss Frankley had been placed in the carriage, and that his mistress had commanded that it should forthwith leave the precincts of the Manor House. My blood rose at this new insult: "Tell the infamous Deva," I replied, "that I know not such a person as Miss Frankley, but that I take, from this hour, her innocent niece, whom she attempts to plunder, under my protection, to cherish through every chance as though she were my own child; bid her also believe, however she may defy it at this moment, that there is a hand of justice which records her deeds; and bold, triumphant as she now is in her wickedness, the time may come when, in her anguish and despair, she may wish even for such an insensibility as this evening has fallen upon Emma Mandeville!"

"It were to be wished, Mrs. Morland," said La Roche—who had stood by while I spoke, with a sneer worthy of a devil upon his lip—"It were to be wished that your friend had in truth a claim to the name of Mandeville!"

"At this speech the indignation which I felt at the surpassing villany of the man became calm even in its excess; and, pointing towards him as poor Emma had herself done, I said, 'Philip La Roche, you cannot look me steadily in the face, and deny that Emma Frankley was the wife of Gerald Mandeville; you know that you were yourself present at the marriage; but

it is well, very well; an appeal to Mr. Wilson, the curate of B——, will settle all these contemplated frauds!’ For a moment even the vile La Roche was abashed by the steadiness of my manner; he did not dare to look in my face, and deny the legality of Emma’s marriage, but he sought refuge in an evasion: ‘You will find it hard to prove your friend’s marriage, Mrs. Morland; the law will scarcely yield to her daughter the Mandeville estates upon your word,’ said he: then he gathered courage, and went on in a bolder strain of villany—‘and for your pretty sentiments about justice, and your appeal to the curate of B——, really, good Mistress Alice, we will set our wit any day against your piety and wisdom: bethink you, it was not likely we would enter into an encounter with a lady who has so acute and powerful a protectress as thyself, and not well arm ourselves ere we took the field; proceed forthwith to the village of B——, pretty, pious Mistress Morland, and invoke the curate in behalf of thy charming friend; and, were they mine, I would venture half the Mandeville estates, that he remembers no such marriage, and that you will find no trace of it in the parish books!’

“These last words of the infamous La Roche filled my heart with a certainty of evil; I then first felt the fear, which afterwards proved only too correct, that he and his employers, Luntley and Deva, had tampered with the weak curate, who had exposed himself to considerable odium by privately solemnizing the marriage between Emma and Mr. Mandeville. A smile of triumph, too, I could perceive hovering on the lip of Luntley, while La Roche spoke. Turning towards the former, I said, ‘It appears, Mr. Luntley, that you have sought an interview with me, under an impression that you could persuade me to affect at least a belief in the frailty of my unfortunate friend; after this we can have no more to say—for I shall always profess the certainty on my mind that she was the wife of Mandeville, and that her child is the lawful possessor of this Manor!’

“‘This is pitiable,’ said Luntley, rising, and following me towards the door; ‘I had hoped better things from the well-known

sense and penetration of Mrs. Morland; I thought not she would attempt to back so absurd a claim.'

" 'I thank you not, Sir!' replied I, 'for that compliment which is made at the expense of my friend's honour:' as I uttered these words, I passed from the door, which, with an affected civility Luntley had risen to open; and, fixing my eyes upon his face at the moment, I perceived that his were fastened on that of the babe, with an expression of malevolent hatred which I shuddered to behold; slightly bowing to him, I hastened through the hall, and entered the carriage in which Emma had been placed, propped with pillows, and still insensible. Alas! this insensibility continued for many hours after we had returned to the inn at Rodenhurst, and was succeeded by a delirium or insanity, which was even more frightful to witness, and in the paroxysms of which she accused Deva Mandeville, and Luntley, of the most frightful crimes—even of the destruction of her marriage certificate, and the murder of her husband, Gerald Mandeville."

Here Alice paused; and so rapt was the attention of her auditors, that a silence of some minutes succeeded the measured accents of her voice, broken only by a low sob from Sybil, whose heart was pierced by this recital of her mother's wrongs. The silence was first interrupted by Lady Anne, who inquired, in a gentle tone, "And how fared it, Mrs. Morland, with the poor lady after that fearful delirium was passed?"

"Alas, sweet young lady!" answered Alice, "it may be said that it never passed; health, indeed, partially returned to Mrs. Mandeville; but her fine mind was for ever destroyed, and the madness which succeeded her fatal visit to Rodenhurst settled into a gentle and harmless, but confirmed insanity."

Another sob broke from Sybil at these words: then she felt the hand which she had placed across her eyes tenderly removed, and found it clasped in that of Lord Fitzwarine, who, with a kind of gentle force, drew her from the seat which she had occupied by the side of Alice, and led her to the deep embra-

sure of a distant window. Meanwhile the party collected round Alice Morland felt freer, now that Sybil was drawn out of immediate hearing, to press for the later particulars of Mrs. Mandeville's life. But Alice was now more stinted in her relation : for the utterance only of the simple story, how she, alone and unassisted, had toiled and struggled in behalf of the insane and ill-fated Emma, must have sounded like an eulogium, pronouncing herself the possessor of every Christian virtue. She, indeed, briefly told how she had led Emma to her own father's house ; and how he, in his disappointed and selfish ambition, had shut his doors against his unfortunate daughter and her child—affecting even to believe the scandal broached by Luntley and his wife, and that a consciousness of guilt, no less than the pressure of misfortune, had driven her into madness. Alice told, also, how she had visited the curate of B——, and how he had denied that he had wedded Emma Frankley to her lover ; but with such a perturbation, such an appearance of horror, when he learned the condition of the unhappy lady, that Alice left him with a firm conviction of his weakness, his misery, and his guilt. Again, too, she told how, upon Emma's death, which occurred in less than two years after those of her father-in-law and husband, spies had evidently been set upon herself and the child ; and of an attempt to steal Sybil from her charge.

“ And were you never able, Alice, to discover the particulars of our poor friend's interview with her sister-in-law ? ” inquired Miss Draycot.

“ Never fully so, Madam,” answered Alice ; “ this much, indeed, I gleaned, amid the wanderings of her fancy, that a proposal had been made of a provision for herself and child, if she would abandon all claim on its behalf to the name and estates of Mandeville, and write herself a disgrace to her own sex and race : more horrible meanings, too, were attached to the ravings of Emma in her wilder moments, words she then uttered, which, could I have proved them upon Luntley and his wife, would have dragged them from their high estate to meet the felon's doom.”

"And how fared you and poor Emma for the means of existence, while she was in this sad state, Alice?" demanded Miss Draycot.

"Madam," replied Alice, casting down her eyes, while a deep blush suffused her face, "He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb suffered us not to know corporal want."

"But, I will tell you, Madam," interposed Lawson, "how Alice toiled for the bread that supported her mistress, and won for herself that blessed peace of mind, that heavenly consolation, which surpasseth the world's wealth: all those fine talents which Emma Frankley's friendship had called forth did Alice Morland devote to the cause of that unhappy friend. She sought a spot where her sad story was unknown, where the finger of scorn could not be pointed at the unhappy Emma: through the long nights of winter she sat at the embroidery frame, she made drawings which she sold, she taught the ladies of the neighbourhood to touch the harp with skill equal to her own. Yes, by labour, incessant labour, night and day, did Alice support her friend."

"Alice, Alice, was this well done?" said the Squire of Draycot, in a reproachful tone.

"Indeed, good Sir, it was," answered Alice; "before our sad visit to Rodenhurst, poor Emma had expressed to me a horror of meeting you till she was the acknowledged widow of Gerald; her mind was morbidly sensitive on the difference you had with her husband, for she often repeated that he had been in the wrong: if I mistake not, your quarrel was occasioned by that very villain, La Roche, from whom she afterwards suffered such great wrong; but, however that may be, she bade me, should she die, never appeal to your friendship, but in a last extremity; 'For, Alice,' she said, 'we ought not to obtrude upon the kindness of Mr. Draycot; for, in truth, poor Gerald erred grievously towards him.'"

"She did me wrong, she did me wrong!" said the Squire, evidently affected.

"But enough of this subject," urged Alice; "and now, to cease wearying this generous and noble company with my

tedious tale, I am well assured, as I said before, that the man who was at Llewenge during my absence, and who made to Mr. Lawson and Sybil such important disclosures about the curate Wilson, could be no other than La Roche, who has now, I suppose, some heavy arrear of hatred against Sir Andrew ; but so cautious has he been of his own safety, that the cause of poor Sybil is yet involved in difficulties."

"It is so, indeed," said Mr. Curzon, "yet we must hope for the best: our first endeavours must be addressed to the discovery of the curate Wilson."

"And in those endeavours," said the Earl, "an extreme caution will be necessary."

"It will be so, indeed, my Lord," replied Mr. Curzon ; "for, let Sir Andrew learn, which he will, that the cause of Miss Man-deville has found supporters in yourself and Mr. Draycot, and all his care will be addressed to prevent that discovery of Wilson, which is a point of such superior importance."

"It would seem, then," said Lawson, rising—for he felt that the discussion of his protégée's fortunes had already occupied the company too long—"that in our Sybil's behalf we must bear in mind the Italian proverb: *Chi va piano, va sano, è chi va sano va lontano.*"

"Even so, my dear Sir," replied Curzon ; "I am satisfied that in this case, at least, to go softly will be to go safely; and to go safely will be to go far!"

CHAPTER VII.

"Because thou art virtuous,
Shall there no more cakes and ale?"

TWELFTH NIGHT.

IT was on the morning of the day before the feast of St. Bennet, that, greatly to the surprise of the villagers of Draycot, their rector was seen taking his way towards the church, accompanied by the tall pale stranger who had arrived at the Manor House on the day of the fox hunt, and who was in truth no other than

Robert Lawson. That the rector could possibly be going to the church, seeing that it was not Sunday, would have been a supposition altogether scorned by the village gossips, had he not been solemnly preceded by Jacob Higgins, the sexton, bearing the keys. The edifice was one of great antiquity and rare beauty, and, though not a large building, it was held as a rich specimen of Gothic architecture. Nothing could be more beautiful and venerable than the exterior of this church; the massive ivy-hung tower, the ancient sculptured porch; the slender, shapely pinnacles; the canopied niches, from which, alas, the figures of the saints had been long removed; the old inscriptions in the Saxon character, which, as less conspicuous, had been suffered to remain; and the gorgeous tracery of leaves and flower work, wrought with so much ease, that it seemed rather as though the hand of the artist had worked in mortar than in stone: these all preserved for the exterior of the church of St. Bennet the grace and beauty of its olden time. Considerable disgust, however, was felt by Lawson, when, in crossing the churchyard, he perceived in one corner some huge fragments of stone, which, on approaching, he found to be the remains of a magnificent Gothic font. Turning eagerly to Croxall, he demanded why the font lay there, and how it had been broken.

"Truly, my friend," answered the latter, "I myself had it removed from the church; for, if you examine it closely, you will perceive, curiously wrought in the stone, crosses, figures of the saints, and other papistical symbols unbecoming our pure and reformed faith; and it was broken, as you see, in the removal."

"I do wonder, though," answered Lawson, "that you did not spare it, if only as a beautiful specimen of art: it seems that it has been tolerated by the principles of the Church of England for a long while, and did not even offend your predecessor, who, I have been told, was a pious and good man!"

Croxall, who had thrust his hands in his pockets, and was coolly whistling, while Lawson, with all the enthusiasm of an antiquary, was examining and lamenting over the relics of the font, now shrugged his shoulders, and replied, "Why, my dear Sir,

as to the preservation of the font by my predecessor, you will, I think, say no more about that, when I tell you that he was a devoted friend of Kettlewell and Law.”*

“Well,” exclaimed Lawson, rising somewhat briskly at these words from his examination of the font, “Kettlewell, Sir, and Law, are among the fairest lights of the English Church—true, worthy Christian clergy, whose consciences have a price beyond that of gold, but who do not think that they honour God’s house by desecrating its beauty.”

Croxall at first opened his eyes very wide at this sally, then coolly kicking a fragment of the font out of his way, he proceeded with Lawson towards the church, the doors of which the sexton had by this time unlocked.

“You see, my dear friend,” said the rector, in reply to Lawson’s last observations, “those worthy gentlemen, Kettlewell and Law, would very possibly have suffered the fantastic font to continue in the church; but my real opinion is, that with their prayers for the dead, and respect for the saints, and other Romish fooleries, they are no better themselves than a sort of Papists in their own way.”

As they entered the church, Croxall desired the sexton to wait in the porch with the keys, while his friend examined the building.

“Now, look you, Lawson,” he said, when the sexton had retired, “tell me, on your conscience, is not that fine plain stone bason better calculated for baptism than the piece of Romish finery which you so much admired in the churchyard? The offerings of the spirit are alone truly acceptable to the Lord, and he heeds not the swinging of censers, or the sounding of timbrels, or a vesture of purple and gold.”

These words were uttered in a very sanctified tone, but they were unfortunately robbed of their due effect by a lurking devil in the rector’s eye, which seemed eternally prompting him to break out into a merriment not very well becoming either his

* Author of “A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.”

years or his profession. Whether, however, Croxall meant or not that Lawson should suppose him serious, his speech would have been equally disagreeable to the latter, by whom the frenzy of puritanical cant, and the whinings of a worldly, self-seeking hypocrisy were equally contemned; he therefore replied, with some dryness of manner, "Truly, Rector, thou wilt find many to bear out thy principles, and build a palace for man's habitation, and a barn for the dwelling of the Lord! and, certainly," he said, looking more narrowly round the building than on his first entrance, "thou hast introduced the barn principle of sacred architecture and adornment with considerable success in this far-famed floridly Gothic church of St. Bennet at Draycot."

"Very considerable success, I do flatter myself," answered the rector, as he looked round, with a most affected complacent air, upon the whitewashed walls and plastered monuments of the church.

"Why, in the name of all the saints, Croxall," cried Lawson, with a look almost aghast, "what hast thou done with the rare painted windows of this church—what demon of barbarism induced thee to substitute in their stead that paltry common glass?"

"The windows, you will observe, my dear Sir," answered Croxall, "were not only filled with the figures of the Popish knights and ladies who had bestowed them, and therefore were unfit ornaments for a church, but they were also defaced by sundry Popish inscriptions, imploring the living to offer prayers for the souls of the persons there portrayed, and who had put up the windows; and I cannot tolerate any such bygone absurdities in a church of which I am minister."

"And yet," answered Lawson, "prayers for the dead are in perfect accordance with the principles of the Church of England."

"Then, my dear Sir, replied the rector, "she has, upon that point, a very bad principle, and wants a new reform. Go to! why should people give us any further trouble after they are

dead? Let them go straight to heaven, or to hell! Pray for the dead, indeed—we have enough to do to pray for ourselves, in my opinion.”

“And in that opinion,” answered Lawson, “peeps out the bitter, uncharitable spirit which belongs to that which we may term essential Protestantism: ‘Take care of myself,’ is its motto; it has nothing to do with the benevolence, the kindness of pure Christianity.”

“Ay,” replied Croxall; “and, were the Papists and our High Churchmen left fairly to work out their own fantastic visions, they would soon convert the mass of the people into a set of fat drones, with their charities and their Church holidays combined. Well, let the poor vote for the High Church and Catholicity, if they will, and they will show wisdom on their part; but, if the rich are aware of their own interests, let them look well to the Low Church, which allows no holidays to rob the master, day after day, of his servant’s labour; which deals in no superfluous charities; which wastes no money in fantastic vestments, and gewgaws of silver and gold for the service; which never recommends fastings, or any impious abstaining from the good things with which this world is provided; but which supports well-lined pews, the national debt, the Protestant succession, and every other blessed comfort that the country knows.”

Having pronounced these words with a most mock heroic tone and gesture, Croxall leaned against a monument in the side aisle, and looked at his companion with an air as if he expected a reply. Lawson, however, had been more busy remarking what he considered the spoliation of the church, than attentive to the rector’s speech; and now he demanded, somewhat testily, “And pray, my friend, may I presume to inquire what, in the excellence of your piety, and the refinement of your Christian taste, you have done with these unfortunate windows: are they in another corner of the churchyard?”

“Surely no, my good Sir,” answered Croxall; “I would not have been guilty of such heathenish extravagance as to destroy

an article of any value; such portions of the glass as could be separated from the Popish inscriptions now fill the windows in Sir Andrew's library at Luntley Hall."

"Sir Andrew's library!" exclaimed Lawson, in an accent of astonishment, and almost of rage.

The rector, however, partially mistook his meaning, and went on. "Oh," he said, "I do not wonder at your surprise, my dear Sir; one would never have thought that Sir Andrew could have tolerated the sight of glass which had a Popish origin. But you see the colours were so brilliant, that it fairly tempted him, that glass being of all rooms so admirably suited to a library. I am sure you would admire the apartment if you were to see it: certainly Sir Andrew has a right admirable taste."

The astonishment of Lawson at the misconception of his meaning under which the rector laboured had kept him silent till now; but, when Croxall paused in his eulogium upon the Baronet's taste, he reproached him with all the bitterness of an enraged antiquary, for having so disposed of the beautiful painted glass.

"And here, too!" he exclaimed, stooping down, "here, by the remnants, I can perceive has been an admirable sepulchral brass torn up in the very wantonness of destruction: was this done by your orders too, Croxall?"

"I know nothing about it, my friend; I leave these matters mostly to the churchwardens," replied the rector, who seemed amused by the indignation of Lawson; "but in sooth, if thou wouldst have informed me ten years ago that thou didst purpose visiting Draycot, I would have saved some of these foolish specimens on which thou placest so undue a value, to bestow on thee for old acquaintance' sake."

"I would not have touched them, Sir! I would not have touched them!" answered Lawson, angrily.

"Then what would please thee, Lawson?" inquired the rector: "of a truth thou dost resemble the dog in the manger, to grudge the specimens to others, yet say thou wouldst not accept them for thyself: what would you do?"

"Leave them where they were, Sir—leave them where they were," replied Lawson.

"Oh, the fool, the fool! how a wise man talks like a fool!" cried a screeching voice at the church door: "take all you can get—take all the dull-looking metal you can get out of the church, and rub it as silly Jemmy does, till he makes it shine like gold."

"Oh, Jemmy is that you?" cried the rector; "come in, man. Now my dear Lawson," he added, turning towards the latter, "I can have the pleasure of introducing you to a fellow-enthusiast, who will right willingly assist in your present labours; I have had at least twenty complaints preferred against Jemmy, by our sapient churchwardens, for disturbing, as you are doing at this moment, the fine fresh coat of whitewash with which they have contrived to give our church so lively an appearance."

Lawson paused in his occupation of scraping off with his pen-knife the thick plaster with which a fine effigy of a knight had been bedaubed; and pointed out to Croxall the beautiful red, blue, and gold, of the arms upon the surcoat. At this sight, Jemmy bounded forwards with a scream of joy, and, drawing out his knife, set to work with a vigour that would soon have released the effigy from its disguise. Meanwhile the rector shook his head at Lawson's denunciations of the vile taste of the whitewashers, and said, with an affected gravity, "Ah, my dear Sir, all this may be very fine in your eyes, and in those of your fellow-antiquarian Jemmy; but your painted windows, and your gilded effigies, are nothing after all in comparison with a chaste, innocent-looking whitewash, and plain glass."

"See, see, red, blue, and gold; bright, yellow gold!" cried the idiot, as he eagerly pursued his task, while Lawson, looking mournfully round him, gave a sigh to the spoliation of the church.

The war against everything graceful and beautiful in sacred architecture had indeed been carried on with a kind of

exterminating fury at Draycot, where the peculiarly Catholic character of the church had especially excited the fury of the Evangelical zealots, who appear upon all occasions to think that they exalt their worship of the Supreme Being in proportion as they communicate to it meanness and vulgarity.

The idiot meanwhile busily pursued his task, when a loud shout, of seemingly extravagant merriment, made itself heard through the open doors of the church: silly James started at the sound, and, hastily pocketing his knife, executed one of his most extraordinary capers, exclaiming, "Oh, oh, they come, they come—I will not tell, I will not tell; for Sir Andrew will see them. Oh, oh, good Sir Andrew; I wish, I wish, they would plough up his fine garden, ah, ah, that would be sport, oh, good Sir Andrew!"

This last amiable wish Jemmy pronounced with an air and tone of spite calculated to give full effect to his words; he then went leaping, screaming, and chuckling, out of the church. As he quitted it, however, the sexton, with a due air of respect and caution, put his head in at the door, and inquired whether his reverence and his friend would not come and see the strange show which Mr. Draycot had got up among the villagers.

"That hare-brained Draycot!" cried the rector, "what mad freak has he executed now?"

"Only the revival of an old sport," answered Lawson, "but one which is indeed rather due to the season of Christmas; but, though we are now near the end of March, I believe the Squire promises himself some peculiar amusement in sending round what should be the 'Yule Plough' to-day."

"Sport, indeed," said the rector, laughing; "for Sir Andrew is this morning abroad for the first time since his accident; and, if they drag their plough through the village, he will inevitably meet them: for he has at this very time gone thither to pay a visit to his amiable man of the law, Mr. Simon Turner: do come now, Lawson, I would not miss witnessing the Baronet's rage for a trifle."

"Truly, he is much obliged to you," answered Lawson, as he

followed Croxall across the churchyard: "how think you Sir Andrew would relish your merriment, when excited only by his ire?"

"Go to, man," cried the rector; "I should laugh at mine own brother under the like circumstances: a man in a passion excels all other provocatives to mirth; and I vow that I am equally obliged to my friend Sir Andrew and the good Squire of Draycot, who between them furnish me with a never-failing fund of amusement. How strange it is that men possessing each an abundant share of the world's good things cannot be content, but must fume, forsooth, and quarrel, about what concerns them not!"

Having made this truly philosophical observation, the rector smiled in a sort which might have testified that he at least was perfectly well satisfied with himself and everything about him. Meanwhile, as he and Lawson crossed the churchyard, an occasional burst of jovial music met their ears; and, on proceeding a little way up the main street of the village, they were met by a very merry assemblage.

First came a company of youths, with masks on their faces, and dressed in jackets of light blue stuff, trimmed with scarlet ribbons, and with swords in their hands, executing as they advanced the evolutions of a curious dance; then appeared six young men of the village, dragging a new plough, ornamented with bunches of spring flowers, and knots of ribbon; these were followed by those professional musicians whose residence at Draycot had been a subject of such great annoyance to Sir Andrew Luntley.

Two more singular figures accompanied this procession—one attired in the grotesque habit of an old woman, with a scarlet petticoat, high-heeled shoes, and an immense steeple-crowned hat, fantastically trimmed with ribbons and artificial flowers. The other figure was yet more strangely arrayed in a dress entirely made of the skin of some animal, a hairy cap on his head, and the tail of a fox hanging down his back: this person held a box, which, by the rattling noise which ensued when he shook

it, evidently contained money. We should not omit to mention that silly Jemmy had joined this party, and went leaping and screaming before them with an air of most excessive delight. The man clad in skins, whose part was evidently that of the fool, or clown, bounded forwards with many fantastic gestures, on seeing the rector, and, holding out his box solicited a donation.

"Out on thee, rascal," said Croxall; "the days have gone by in which the fool could make a trade of his folly."

"So please your reverence," answered the fellow, "we are too well aware of that—the knaves certainly beat us all to nothing in these days; but since their trade is so good, and ours so bad, they might surely spare us a groat, now and then, out of charity."

"My friend," answered the rector, "if the fool's justest claim be made upon the knave, you can scarce do better than follow the steps of your companions; to the owner of yon house your plea must be undeniable."

As he spoke, Croxall pointed towards a dwelling of some pretensions, which stood a little apart at the end of the main street. The fool shook his head. "Truly, your reverence," he said, "law is not justice, or the fool's claim upon Mr. Simon Turner would indeed be undeniable; if your reverence now would give him the force of example."

"Out of the way, fellow," reiterated Croxall; "I have nothing to give thee."

"Nay, then," answered the fool, "if your reverence will give nothing, and if Mr. Simon will give nothing, we will make him pay the knave's penalty for two instead of one."

Croxall only laughed at this sally; and, Lawson having bestowed a slight donation, the masker hastened after his companions, who had assembled, dancing to their merry music, before the door of Mr. Simon Turner. There was an air of finery and pretension about the dwelling of this gentleman, which seemed to denote that he was upon the best possible terms with the world and with himself, so far as the world's

all-important item, money, was concerned. Mr. Turner's house was newly built of fine flaring red brick ; it had three stone steps, a great many windows, a very bright green door, and a still brighter brass knocker, and a large brass plate with " Mr. Simon Turner," engraved on it in very large letters. Before Mr. Turner's house, be it observed, was a small lawn, fenced from vulgar intrusion by some half dozen white posts, connected by chains which swung between them, and were also painted white. Now, this small lawn had been the subject of anything but an amicable dispute between Mr. Turner and the poor cottagers whose humble dwellings stood near to his gaudy house ; for Mr. Turner had fixed his abode, as before observed, a little apart from the end of the main street, the side of his dwelling edging a lane which led away into the open country, while before it stretched the village green, of which the cottagers warmly protested that his lawn formed a portion ; and that he had not, nor could not have purchased it with the piece of ground on which he had built his house.

Mr. Turner, however, was a person who took especial good care upon all occasions to make his might constitute his right : and the argument with which he supported his appropriation of the lawn, freely translated from the jargon of the law, was neither more nor less than this :—" My friends, I am a man tolerably well to do in the world, and you are wretchedly poor, moreover, I am backed by a person infinitely richer than myself ; and am besides an attorney, and will be sworn upon provocation to twist the most innocent words you may utter into a rope strong enough to hang you, considering the ticklish nature of the times in which we live. Therefore I will, in all friendliness, give you a warning—be you content, good people, that I am for the present satisfied with so trifling an infraction of your comforts as this appropriation of a corner of your village green ; for be you assured that, should it suit my sovereign will and pleasure, with Sir Andrew Luntley and the law for my supporters, I will appropriate your pigs, your poultry, or anything else of yours, upon which I may happen to set my fancy."

Thus stood matters then with Mr. Turner and the cottagers near his house ; this house had been finished only a few months before the arrival of Lawson and his companions at Draycot ; and the appropriation of the piece of the green was a matter of still more recent date, and one upon which Mr. Draycot had promised the injured cottagers that, before he also employed the law to wrest it from their oppressor, he would devise for them some means of wofully annoying him.

As the dancers, musicians, and men who dragged the plough, now drew near to Mr. Turner's door, silly Jemmy bounded before them, screaming, and snapping his fingers with delight. "Now, now, Sir Andrew," he cried to himself, "now Harry Draycot, oh, oh, ye will be even with each other yet for the fool's sake ; oh, oh, ye will be like the cats, and fight till nothing but your ears are left ; hurrah ! hurrah ! how these wise men make sport for fools !"

On fairly arriving in front of Mr. Turner's house, the musicians forthwith burst into a strain which might have been termed rather more brilliant than agreeable, drums and trumpets leading the movement, while the dancers clashed their swords in a most military style ; and half a dozen urchins of the village, well armed with marrow bones, cleavers, and good shrill voices, kept tolerable time to the music, and very effectually added to the almost deafening uproar. That there was a considerable portion of spite mixed with this fun, was pretty evident, from the conduct both of the actors and spectators, bursts of loud laughter and clapping of hands mingling with the clamorous music. The gaudy curtains of Mr. Simon Turner's house were drawn over the windows, and for a good ten minutes that worthy gentleman continued to affect an utter contempt for the noisy group who were amusing themselves with a dance upon his much-prized lawn. This magnanimity on his part, however, by no means suited the taste of silly Jemmy, who promised himself a considerable accession of sport from the appearance of the lawyer ; and taking, therefore, one of his running leaps through the dancers, he applied his hand to

the brass knocker, and raised such a din, that Simon Turner, in a mortal apprehension for the safety of his house, immediately hastened to open the door.

Mr. Turner did not look at all angry, or red in the face, for the excellent reason that he could not, his complexion having that exquisite tint of tallow which eschews all colour but its own. Mr. Turner was not a gentleman remarkable for personal attractions—he could not have said,

“That, if a shape could win a heart,
He had a shape to win!”

He had a very short neck, and a figure which, considerably below the middle size, seemed hesitating between clumsiness and downright fat; his hands, too, could a gentleman have such a hand! a hand, indeed! a little fat, doughy, dumpy paddle. His face was no less attractive—round, large, and heavy; with a pair of eyes resembling a boiled gooseberry, and with its afore-named tallowy complexion, enlivened by lank black hair. It may be supposed that Mr. Turner was in a passion, for he clenched his hands, and stamped most vehemently: the stamping was seen, not heard; and Jemmy, who had darted down the steps the moment that the door was opened, now posted himself in front of the dancers, and, spreading out his arms like the sails of a windmill, made a bow to Mr. Turner which might have rivalled the Chinese ko-too. This mark of extreme deference on Jemmy's part did not seem to be accepted by Mr. Turner in a spirit of equal good-will; for, redoubling his gesticulations, that gentleman jumped down his own door steps, with an agility such as he had never before been known to exhibit, and dealt such a right earnest blow at the idiot, that if it had descended, according to the intention of the donor, upon his face, it would have carried evidence of the gift for some time to come, a fortnight at the least. This, however, was a mark of courtesy which Jemmy thought proper to decline; and, executing one of his most extraordinary capers, Mr. Turner for

once found that he had overreached himself, and was suddenly occupying a most undignified position on his hands and knees. From this he hastily scrambled, and stamped about, evidently screaming at the top of his voice, though not one word could be heard for the uproarious music, the shouting, whistling, and laughing of his uncereemonious visitors. In their own good time the sword dancers got through the evolutions of their dance; then, at a sign from the fool or clown, the music stopped; and as that worthy advanced, evidently with an intention of addressing the worshipful Mr. Turner, the motley crowd of men and boys held their peace. The moment, however, that a symptom of quiet appeared, the thick clattering accents of Mr. Turner were heard: "I'll indict you for a nuisance! I'll have you committed for a trespass! I'll send you to the county gaol! I'll have out a body of constables! I'll have down the military!"

"Quite unnecessary, excellent Mr. Turner; we will by no means put you to that trouble," said the clown, with a tone of most provoking tranquillity; "now you see the result of a good character: here are you, Mr. Simon Turner, known for miles round Draycot as a gentleman of equal penetration and benevolence—one well skilled in the law, one who knows he must swear to his men, and who would not for the world be such a fool as to think of taking out warrants against he does not know whom, a company of fellows who come to him for a little sport with masks on their faces. Then for the benevolence of Mr. Turner; who lives at Draycot, and knows not how it is his custom to feed the hungry and clothe the naked? who doubts that he will encourage the revival of the good old sport of the Yule Plough, albeit we have got it a little out of season? Oh, oh, my friends, three cheers for Mr. Simon Turner, three cheers for the noble donation he is about to bestow: he is none of your whining, canting fellows, to prefer the nasal twang of a Puritan preacher, singing Psalms in a field, to the hearty hurrah of a hundred honest English throats; hurrah, then,

for Mr. Simon Turner, who would give every man in England a fair share of old ale, and roast beef, a merry dance, and a jolly song!"

A most deafening and sarcastic shout was raised as the clown ceased speaking: it was in vain that Mr. Turner sought to deprecate the honour for which his inclination was about as good as his claim: but, while the crowd of rustics pertinaciously gave him a three times three, he renewed his former threats of constables, soldiers, and county gaols, deriving thereby at least the satisfaction of screaming and raving, as well as his visitors.

On the conclusion of these mock cheers, the clown again advanced with an affected obeisance, praying for a donation from the liberal Mr. Turner. This prayer was of course rejected in terms not the most ceremonious imaginable, mixed with sundry threats of legal methods of revenge.

"Ha, ha, Simon, what then?" screamed silly Jemmy; "what then? You do not know their names, you cannot see their faces; ha, ha, who is the fool now, I wonder? who is the fool now? wise lawyer Turner, or silly Jemmy, who is the greater fool?"

"Rascal, I see thy face, and know thy name! and I will have thee in a gaol to-morrow!" cried the lawyer, again darting forwards, and seizing silly Jemmy by the throat.

The idiot, however, easily escaped from his grasp, and forthwith, twisting his features into one of their most diabolical grins, he exclaimed, "Fool again, lawyer Turner, fool again; silly Jemmy has done you no harm; and who will bear witness for you, who will send silly Jemmy to gaol on lawyer Turner's oath? Oh, oh, a fool again, a fool again! and, I say, lawyer," he continued, "take care, or I'll tell, I'll tell my father, and he will bring red hot pincers to nip you with o' nights; oh, oh, lawyer Turner, you will surely be his visitor at last; they blow the furnace night and day, and keep it hot, quite hot, and ready for lawyer Turner."

The hideous grimaces with which silly Jemmy accompanied

his threat seemed almost to scare the lawyer himself, and he shrank back upon his doorsteps, while the mob, which seemed wonderfully delighted with Jemmy's promises respecting his father, gave him a hearty cheer: when it had died away, the clown stepped forwards, and, in a speech full of mock regret, deplored the necessity which appeared for executing "Yule Plough law" against Mr. Simon Turner. A loud shout burst out as he ceased speaking, and forthwith the dancers, drawing off the lawn, made way for the young men who held the plough; who, on their part, immediately advancing, laid waste the pride of lawyer Turner in his smooth turf, while that excellent individual stood upon his doorsteps, bemoaning its destruction in most piteous terms, and even condescending, as the deep furrows rose under the destructive engine, to use entreaties for its preservation. His entreaties met the same derision which had been awarded to his threats, and the progress of the plough over the lawn was hailed with loud laughter and clapping of hands.

At this moment the noise of horses' hoofs met the ears of those individuals who were standing on the skirts of the crowd; among these were Lawson and the rector, who stood upon the steps of the village inn, which was about a bowshot from the house of Mr. Turner, a view of whose garden might be well commanded from that position. The hilarious rector had, on his part, seemed for once to have most heartily sympathized with the mirth of his parishioners, and to have enjoyed the ploughing up of the lawyer's grass plot with as much relish as the most ragged and curly-headed urchin in the crowd. "I do wonder now," he said, turning to Lawson, "that my good friend, Sir Andrew, appears not in the lawyer's behalf; I know he is in the house at this moment, for I met him on the way thither ere we visited the church; and, as they were to hold a long council together, doubtless, he is there still: now, I do think the sight of the Baronet would scare some of those droll rascals; and, assuredly, if there be honour among thieves, Sir Andrew should say something for Simon Turner. But what

have we here?" pursued the rector, as the horses of the approaching riders came briskly over the gravel path in the centre of the village green. "As I am a sinner, the Draycots, and, if I mistake not, the young Lord Fitzwarine: now, if the villagers do but hail them, we shall have sport at last; our good Andrew Luntley is not the man to hide, with the enemy grinning at him through a loophole."

The surmise of Croxall proved correct; the news quickly spread through the crowd that the approaching horsemen were no other than the Draycots and their noble friend; and, as they neared the attorney's house, a simultaneous cheer hailed their appearance.

"Well, my friend," cried the old Squire, as a path opened in the multitude for the clown to approach him, "well, have you meted out justice to Mr. Simon Turner? By my faith, if you have, before he can put down fresh turf on the land which he has robbed you of, he shall find that for once law and justice are the same."

"Ay, ay, Sir," replied fifty voices in a breath, "we have given plough law to the lawyer."

Then, as the Squire and his companions rode through the dividing crowd, towards Turner's house, rose a deafening cry of "Long live the noble Lord Fitzwarine, and the good Squire of Draycot!"

"Well, my friends," said old Draycot, laughing, as he regarded the grim appearance of the ploughed-up lawn, "I see you have done your duty like good men of the olden time; and there is roast beef and ale at the Manor House to-day for all who have aided in such a right act of English justice; to-morrow, we will see if the law permits Master Simon Turner to pilfer your village green at his pleasure."

"I defy you, Sir, I defy you! and I will have revenge, and law, and justice myself! I will, Sir, I will!" said, or rather shouted Mr. Turner, from his topmost doorstep, to the old Squire, who had ridden up to the posts which confined the obnoxious lawn.

What reply Mr. Draycot might have returned to the lawyer was prevented by the sudden appearance of another actor in the scene, no less a personage than Sir Andrew Luntley himself, who, giving the unhappy lawyer a push that sent him sprawling, leaped over his body, and, running across the rugged ploughed lawn, seized the rein of Mr. Draycot's horse.

"Hurra, hurra, Andrew Luntley! True blue, true blue; I said so!" cried the rector, who, in company with Lawson, had made his way to the front of the crowd.

Sir Andrew, however, was in no mood to notice the applause of his friend; there was a frenzy in his rage which deprived him for the moment of the power of speech; and those of the villagers who stood near shuddered as they looked in his face, for they felt that the visage of a fiend might have been the same. The usually dark colour of Sir Andrew's cheek had fled, and, like his lips, it was ashy pale, while round the scarcely cicatrized wound on his forehead the skin was dark and discoloured; but it was the storm of wild and unholy passions, the envy, hatred, and malice, so strongly depicted in Sir Andrew's face, which made it so truly horrible to behold.

He forced his white lips to utterance, while Mr. Draycot, curious as to what he would say, suffered his horse's reins to remain in Sir Andrew's grasp. "Beware, Harry Draycot," he cried; "we have a long—a long arrear of hate and wrong to settle. But look, look to yourself, ere you undertake to promote the claims of an impostor. Beware both for yourself and for her who is called Sybil Mandeville: oh, 'tis well done to undertake her cause; good, worthy Squire, you assist me well. Held to contempt, and trodden down by you—baffled at every turn, despised, insulted, struck, struck—by Heaven, struck!" With these last words, Sir Andrew loosed his hold of the rein of Mr. Draycot's horse, and with clenched hands threatened, in the paroxysm of his rage, the younger Squire. "Beware, beware," he cried, "all, all of you, beware; you know me not, you have not known me yet; Squire and peasant, you who have defied, and you who have evaded me, you

know not Andrew Luntley yet. High and low, Squire Draycot, or Farmer Ashley—you who have tempted me to hate, like that of hell, shall know what vengeance such a hatred seeks !”

“ I fear not your vengeance, Sir Andrew Luntley,” said the Squire, with a calmness of contempt which did but exasperate the already boiling passions of the Baronet !

“ You know not what it is you have to fear !” cried Sir Andrew, furiously. “ Oh, wise, oh, worthy Squire ! well, well, I will not show the amount of your reckoning until you are called upon for the payment ; but mistake me not, hope not to elude the debt of my vengeance ; you shall all know who Andrew Luntley is, from the Squire and his hot-brained son to the meanest hind in Draycot.”

“ And, from Squire to hind, we are all prepared to meet this boasted vengeance,” cried the man who had personated the clown, hastily stripping off the mask and rough hairy cap, which formed part of his disguise, and showing the bluff, honest face of Farmer Ashley. “ Who talks of vengeance ?” he said ; “ is not this English land, with law alike for peasant and for prince ?”

“ Oh, yes, yes, honest Farmer Ashley,” cried the Baronet, turning towards him : “ well said, Farmer Ashley ; there is law for every man in this good English land—right, right ; there is law, and Farmer Ashley shall find there is, ere long ; so, too, it was Farmer Ashley who played the fool and rioter at once, and trespassed on the property of a good and loyal servant of King George : oh, oh, Farmer Ashley, know you there is a crime the law calls treason ?”

At these words, and the threat implied in them, the crowd of the peasantry broke out into a tumult of yells, groans, and execrations : nothing, indeed, but the presence of Mr. Draycot himself had kept them at all quiet under the manifestation of the hatred which Sir Andrew bore to that gentleman ; but now that Farmer Ashley, a great favourite in Draycot and its neighbourhood, also was attacked, all attempts to check the open exhibition of the dissatisfaction, of which they had already

given sundry signs and tokens, in a stray hiss, or passing groan, proved vain ; and Mr. Draycot perceived, with some regret, that the storm which Sir Andrew had himself invoked would descend on his head with very disagreeable violence. More than one hand had raised a stone to fling at the Baronet, when it was withheld by the loud and stern command of Mr. Draycot : “ My friends, as you value my esteem, give not that bad man a just plea against you.”

The stones were then unwillingly relinquished ; but among the many there assembled who had cause to curse the name of Sir Andrew Luntley, there were some who had determined that they would not altogether lose so favourable an opportunity for a little personal revenge. These, therefore, made a rush upon the ploughed lawn, resolving to hustle the Baronet, if they did not dare to strike him, while every term of that abuse which it must be admitted he deserved was freely lavished upon him by the mob. Some among these were rather imprudent in their invectives, and more than one voice was heard to cry—“ Down with the Whigs !” “ No stock-jobbing landlords !” “ Send him to the Elector of Hanover !” “ Let him and the Duke go hang together !” and sundry other exclamations, indicative of anything rather than affection for the reigning family ; and which, if uttered in London, might have brought upon the speakers the fate which the worthy authorities of that city had in the preceding reign inflicted upon the unfortunate schoolmaster, Bournois—that of being whipped to death, because he had foolishly said that King George was not the rightful sovereign of the realm. It would, however, have been a hard matter even for Sir Andrew Luntley to have fixed upon the men who raised these imprudent cries ; indeed, he was now being driven to and fro by the crowd, which had closed round him, in a style which was by no means agreeable to his feelings, and which left him no time for particular observation. This incapacity on his part was, however, made up for by the ingenuity of Mr. Turner, who, having risen from the ground, was busily engaged, standing on his doorstep, and noting in his tablets all these

traitorous exclamations, for which exercise of genius and industry some unknown hand rewarded him with a buffet, that stretched him in a most senseless, and therefore harmless, condition on his own threshold.

Meanwhile, curses, "not loud, but deep," were in the ears of Sir Andrew, as he was driven to and fro among the rustics, from many of whom his avarice and luxury had taken every comfort that could make life endurable; but still, amid the hum and execrations, he could hear the loud voice of the elder Mr. Draycot sternly commanding the peasants, as they valued his favour, to forbear.

These, however, seemed to experience a more smarting sense of wrong from the consciousness that their oppressor for the time being was in their power; and Sir Andrew felt that his situation was fast becoming one of some danger, when he became sensible that another person was aiding his endeavours to force a passage through the crowd; the next moment, a firm hand was laid upon his collar, his assailants fell back, and, looking up, he beheld Lord Fitzwarine: this active interference on the part of the young nobleman seemed partially to awe the rustics, and they offered no very violent opposition to the effort by which he dragged the Baronet through the mass into which they had wedged themselves. Sir Andrew, as he now breathed a little more freely, could hear the sound of the rapidly approaching wheels of some vehicle.

"A carriage, Sir, has been sent for you by the rector," said Lord Fitzwarine: "for your own sake, get away from these angry people."

Sir Andrew ground his teeth in the bitterness of his rage, and scowled darkly back upon the crowd, as, by the conjoined efforts of Lord Fitzwarine and himself, he stood just free of its suffocating pressure, and on the edge of the path by which Croxall's carriage had now drawn up, for Lord Fitzwarine's information was correct: on the first symptom of a collision between Sir Andrew and the peasants, the rector, who was not without an apprehension that they might treat him to the same fare as his friend,

and who was for his own part very pacifically disposed, thought proper to retire with all possible expedition, first telling Lawson that he would send a carriage for the Baronet.

To be driven in this sort from the field, by no means suited the taste of the last-mentioned worthy; yet, as he turned his head once more towards the peasants, and beheld them still standing in a compact mass, with muttering voices, clenched hands, and heavy brows, he felt that he must lack wisdom to risk a new encounter, and therefore leaped into the carriage; ere it drove off, however, he leaned forward, and, fixing on his deliverer the look of a basilisk, he cried, with a sneer, "And you too, noble Lord Fitzwarine, are among these rioters."

The cheeks of the young man flushed, and his quick reply was evidently an angry one; but the sound of his voice was lost in the storm of hisses and groans which pursued Sir Andrew from the scene of his discomfiture.

The harmless merriment of the day was now spoiled, the good meeting broken, "with most admired disorder;" and a somewhat serious consultation was held at the Manor House that night, as to the probable consequences of the very natural, but certainly very rash outbreak of popular feeling which the morning had witnessed.

That same night a travelling carriage with six horses, and two outriders, departed from Luntley Hall, and the Baronet was whirled along the road to London, with a speed almost sufficient to gratify even the impatience of his malice.

CHAPTER VIII.

“The puzzling sons of party next appeared,
In dark cabals and nightly juntos met;
And now they whispered close, now shrugging reared
The important shoulder, then, as if to get
New light, their twinkling eyes were inward set;
No sooner Lucifer recalls affairs,
Than forth they various rush in mighty fret,
When, lo ! pushed up to power and crowned their cares,
In comes another set, and kicketh them down stairs.”

CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.

It was with a pulse somewhat quickened from its usual steady beating, that Sir Andrew Luntley, three days after his arrival in London, found himself ushered into the presence of two men, each of whom he felt to be in some sort an arbiter of his fate. The grave middle-aged servant who had announced Sir Andrew, retreating with a reverential bow, closed the door noiselessly behind him, and a dead silence prevailed in the spacious and somewhat gloomy apartment, for those whom the Baronet visited rose not to greet his presence. The uneasiness of Luntley meanwhile being increased by this cold reception, he hesitated for a moment to advance, and glanced round the room with an air of indecision and diffidence very unusual to him.

That chamber, as we have said, was somewhat gloomy ; it was situated on the ground-floor of an ancient house on the confines of the city of Westminster ; the walls were wainscoted with oak, the windows hung with damask curtains of a dusky, dead crimson colour ; from these windows, the eye wandered over a trim old-fashioned garden, which extended to the banks of the river, which latter object, indeed, no way increased the cheerfulness of the scene without ; for the day was a dull one, rather like those of November than the end of March ; and the yellow fogs peculiar to London and its vicinity, creeping over the bosom of the

river, seemed to settle in dense masses among the clipped shrubberies of the garden. As to the apartment, despite its extreme dullness, and the almost puritanical abstinence from ornament and gay colours in its furniture, it exhibited sufficient evidence that the master of the house could boast not merely of competency, but wealth. The foot sank deep upon the dark, rich carpet, and luxurious repose might have been enjoyed upon the well-stuffed couches, covered with satin damask of the same colour as the curtains; while, in the vicinity of the fire, a magnificent Indian screen stretched half the width of the apartment. Within the shelter of this screen was placed a table of carved and highly polished oak; and beside it were two chairs, on which sat the persons Sir Andrew came to visit.

Something staid, and even severe, there was in the aspect of these men, who were both verging to the decline of life, and who alike wore the peculiar sable garb of the clerical order.

One of them, the taller and thinner of the two, raised his eyes on Sir Andrew's entrance, but, instantly dropping them, folded his arms upon his breast, waiting seemingly for the Baronet to broach the business of the interview. There was something, as he thus sat with downcast eyes, peculiarly repulsive in the countenance of this man—the thin, tightened lips, the grizzled brows, drawn into an habitual frown, the pale hollow cheeks, seeming the signs of a bitter and misanthropic, rather than of a mortified and humble spirit. Yet that face was not altogether deficient in evidence of mind; but its tokens were those of mind perverted from benevolent and noble aims, and occupied only with the dark projects of a persecuting bigotry.

The character of this man, however, belied not the expression of his face: had the spirit of the times permitted a free course to the suggestions of his intolerance, Francis Blackburne would, we may well believe, have renewed for the Catholics of England sufferings as severe as any they had known during the first progress of the Reformation, and more worthily even than by his writings have proved his claim to a place beside the persecutors of those times.

The countenance of Blackburne's companion was also somewhat severe, but it was less so than that of the Archdeacon; to judge by the expression of this other person's face, it might have been said that he was a man rather inflexible and hard than cruel, and that his intellect was of a higher and more commanding cast than that of his companion."

The silence, meanwhile, of these persons, which on his first entrance had somewhat embarrassed, now irritated Sir Andrew; and, after the hesitation of a few moments, he resumed his usual boldness, and, abruptly advancing, inquired, with a slight air of asperity in his tone and manner, whether his Lordship had explained to Archdeacon Blackburne, according to his promise, the difficulty in which he, Sir Andrew, was involved.

"Surely I have kept my word with thee, Sir Andrew," answered Dr. Hoadley; for it was that dignitary whom the Baronet addressed.

"And what then, my Lord?" eagerly inquired Sir Andrew; "can a clue be yet obtained by which we may discover whether this man, this Wilson, yet lives? You, my Lord, and you, my most dear and reverend friend," pursued Sir Andrew, turning towards the Archdeacon, "will perceive of how much consequence it is to me, in opposing the frauds of the Squire of Draycot and his Papist colleagues, to discover whether this man, who they will pretend performed the marriage of the heir of Rodenhurst, still lives."

"I regret, Sir Andrew," replied Blackburne, "that I cannot at the moment furnish you with any clue to the discovery of Wilson: something do I remember of him at the time that I was Vicar of B——: he was a man with an undue leaning towards the idolatrous adherents of the Church of Rome, disguising to himself this backsliding, this want of zeal, yea, in his own vain mind converting it to a merit, under the terms of Christian charity and kindness. I am free to own it would please not me that the Manor of Rodenhurst should take a rancorous Papist for its owner; but, alas! Wilson resigned his curacy even before I ceased to be Vicar of B——; something too I do remember,

through the long lapse of twenty years, about an accession of property which compelled him to change his name: thus you see, Sir Andrew, it will not be easy to discover his abode."

While Blackburne spoke, Sir Andrew, in compliance with a sign from the Bishop, had drawn a chair near the table by which the two dignitaries sat; a dark shade of disappointment crossed his features when first the Archdeacon named his inability to direct him in his endeavour to find the curate, upon whom so much depended; but Blackburne's open avowal of his indisposition towards Sybil's cause gave vigour to the hope which he still had of wronging the orphan; and his face glowed with an exultation not unremarked by Hoadley, who sat with his arms folded, leaning slightly forwards over the table, and with his eyes keenly fixed upon the Baronet's face. That exultation, too, which appeared even in a face every feature of which had been long practised to the arts of deception, was also visible in the voice, low as were the tones of reply. "Oh!" exclaimed Sir Andrew, "if it be not easy even with your aid, Most Reverend, to find this crazed curate, will the matter be one of less difficulty to those whose every step we may embarrass with fantastic charges of disaffection to the government of our most gracious King—against whom we may raise the cry of Papist and Nonjuror?"

"But there is yet a difficulty, mine excellent Sir Andrew," said Hoadley, leaning still more forwards, and fastening upon Luntley a look of such keen and withering penetration, that even the bold and crafty Baronet quailed under the consciousness that he had to contend with or mislead a mind the vigour of which was at least equal to that of his own. "There is yet a difficulty, dear Sir Andrew," pursued the Bishop. "We will suppose now, merely for the sake of argument—we will suppose that this foolish Wilson yet lives, and may come forward to avow that he did perform the marriage ceremony between Emma Frankley and Gerald Mandeville: in his power it must surely be to produce some proof beyond his mere assertion. How, then, would those stand in the public eye who should

have attempted to back so gross a fraud, though perpetrated—we will again for the sake of argument say—even by such a person as yourself? It were dangerous, Sir Andrew, for the most powerful to attempt to support you then.”

In his eagerness to secure the countenance of the Bishop, Luntley, in replying to this speech, somewhat lost sight of his usual caution. “Nay, my Lord,” he answered, “even under circumstances so disgraceful to myself as those which you are pleased to imagine, there would be no danger for the most influential persons in the ministry or the Church in lending me their countenance, unless Wilson had actually the certificate of the marriage to produce: who will credit the assertions of a man bound, as he must be, to confess in the first instance the most glaring defalcations from the truth? Would not the world think it likely that he who had been prevailed upon to conceal a marriage from a motive of self-interest, might also from the same motive affect to have performed one? And, for the certificate, that he can never, never show.”

“And who should declare that,” cried the Bishop, “save he who knows that a marriage has been performed, and that he has the proofs of it in his possession?”

The colour rose high on Luntley’s cheek at these words, so coldly and calmly uttered; he had no mind to avow the extent of his guilt to a man as stern and daring as himself, however far he might have ventured with the easy and profligate Croxall; he wished not, in truth, to feel himself in the Bishop’s power, though he felt it necessary to seek his support. He however answered, with an unflinching air, “Who shall say that I have declared a knowledge of Gerald Mandeville’s marriage? Like your Lordship, I have but made suppositions. But if it please you, we will pursue these suppositions yet further: we will suppose Sybil Mandeville to be indeed the true heiress of Rodenhurst, and that I—even I, Andrew Luntley—by force and fraud, hold the certificate of her mother’s marriage.”

“Then, my son,” answered the Bishop, “thou dost suppose thyself a most abominable villain.”

"It may be so," returned Sir Andrew, with a sneer; "but, good lack, right reverend Lord Bishop, those wise and sober gentlemen the moralists are all agreed, that villains are the tools which ministers of state work withal; this they hold as a general rule, and most surely it must apply to the admirable Whig and Low Church ministers of England in the present day."

"That argument is certainly inconfutable," replied Hoadley; "villains are the tools of ministers of state; but, my good Sir Andrew, it were sometimes well to remember that these kind of tools are invariably cast aside when their edge is turned, when their use has become sufficiently notorious to involve discredit."

"And when shall that time come to the Whigs?" cried Sir Andrew. "Will they espouse, in despite of a good servant, the cause of one who is supported by such fantastic dreamers as Harry Draycot and Lord Aumerle? My Lord—my Lord, surely they are more wise in their generation; they know themselves to be essentially the foes of the people: the old romance of chivalry yet lingers among the Tories, and would prevail in the establishment of Sybil's claims; but will the Whigs favour those claims? Do not they know the spirit of an ancient nobility has a sympathy for the people—that the Catholic spirit of the High Church would also plead in the nation's behalf; and do not they also know that they are themselves but a handful, great only while successful?"

Hoadley had blenched not in his steady gaze while the Baronet spoke. Blackburne, on his part, kept his eyes steadily cast downwards, but the occasional gathering of a frown upon his brow might have seemed to betoken that he liked not the plain terms in which Sir Andrew thought fitting to speak both of himself and others: it was as if the worthy Archdeacon would have preferred, even among such close friends, a slight varnish of hypocrisy, or was really so sincere and simple-hearted in his hot bigotry, that he supposed all Whigs and Low Churchmen to be as candid and enthusiastic as himself. The Bishop, however, was either less nice or more penetrating; and he replied to the Baronet, "It may not be gainsaid, Sir Andrew; thy claims upon

our ministry are indeed great, especially touching that matter of the stocks."

"Yes, there, there, my Lord," cried Luntley, breaking in, and forgetting, in the greed of the money jobber, the nearer interests of the moment—"yes, my Lord; long life and glory to the national debt, and glory and life as long to the memory of Burnet let nations writhe and struggle, let them toil and starve, the yoke is on their necks; their rulers borrow money, and the interest must be paid by them: what matter, what matter if they coin it in their blood?"

"Surely not to the usurer who wins," answered Hoadley; "but, reverting, Sir Andrew, more closely to this very mysterious affair of your own, it seems you admit that the young lady who advances this, as you call it, unjust claim to the estates of Rodenhurst, is likely to be supported in her claim by no less a person than the Earl of Aumerle."

"And that Earl of Aumerle," cried Blackburne, bitterly, "would all but encourage the scarlet impurities of Rome herself; is not his house open to the Nonjuror; was he not more than suspected of a leaning towards the cause of the Pretender; has he not the malice of all but downright Papistry in his heart?"

"It may be, it may be," said Hoadley, in his quiet, deprecating manner: "but, my dear friend, whatever may be in the heart of Aumerle, there is a candid, unimpeachable loyalty in his words and actions: he is believed to love in his soul the cause of the Stuarts; but that cause is now desperate; and the Earl of Aumerle is a man of vast influence, much beloved, and respected no less for his character than his station. I think our ministers are wise; the tempest is past, and they would scarcely care to be at issue with one who might cause the clouds again to gather around them; rather, I think they would do much to win the Earl of Aumerle; nor will they look very favourably on any of their own partisans who shall uselessly provoke his hostility."

"Oh, fear me not for that, my Lord," replied Sir Andrew;

"if our ministers are wise, so also is Aumerle: let them pursue what measures they will, he has more sense than to throw away his title and fortune on a ruined cause. Would only I could discover if this Wilson lives!"

"It scarcely matters that, unless he did perform the marriage of Gerald Mandeville," said Hoadley, returning to his former point, with a pertinacity which Sir Andrew found extremely disagreeable. Blackburne, however, came to the Baronet's aid.

"But it does matter, my Lord," he said, "to silence at once the obnoxious claims of a Papist, and the invidious clamour of the High Churchmen. What! is the name of a worthy and God-fearing man, such as our friend, Sir Andrew, to be made the sport of their tongues? Is his worldly substance to be held, as it were, during their pleasure, while they put forth audacious pretensions in favour of illegitimate or supposititious children? What—what! has it come to this? is the Government of England so inefficient to protect one of its most true servants?"

This was the exact point to which Luntley had all along endeavoured to drive the conversation, and nothing could have been to him more gratifying than this speech. "Ay, indeed, Most Reverend, it is there," he said; "I had presumed to hope that neither Church nor State, for which I have laboured so hard, would have abandoned me at once to the malice of those who are the avowed enemies of both: I had hoped that even you, Reverend Sir, and my Lord Bishop, would have condescended to assist my endeavours to discover this curate Wilson. I thought not it would be desirable that a bigoted and base-born Papist should wrest the Manor of Rodenhurst from my hand."

The extreme anxiety of Luntley had more than once, during this conversation, betrayed him into an eagerness and irritability of manner which was not usual to him who prospered chiefly on his craft; and now his flushed cheek, flashing eye, and rapid utterance escaped not the observation of the cool and unimpassioned prelate: but it was only in connexion with the Mandevilles, or the family of Draycot, that Sir Andrew lost the command over himself.

"Nay, Sir Andrew," said Dr. Hoadley, in the same cutting tone which had before angered the Baronet, "it appears that you mistake my meaning. I believe I have not denied that it were something more than vexatious to see the rich lands of Rodenhurst pass into the possession of one disaffected, we may well believe, both towards Church and State ; I will even say it were desirable, and in accordance with mine own wish, that you should yourself remain the lord of that noble Manor : therefore will I, together with my friend the Archdeacon, use all lawful means to discover for you whether Wilson is yet alive ; for, oh, Sir Andrew, it were a woe for thee, and a shame unto thy friends, shouldst thou stand forth to the world as the betrayer of an orphan babe—as the felon who stole registers from a parish book : of deeds even so foul, I think you say, your enemies accuse you."

Sir Andrew fetched his breath heavily, and gulped down the rage which almost choked him, ere he replied to what he felt, under the circumstances, to be a biting taunt. "Such, indeed, my Lord," he said, "are the slanders invented by Harry Draycot ; but let him beware, let him beware !" continued the Baronet, in a deep hoarse accent. "If the ministers are indifferent to my fate, they are not so to their own."

"Be patient, be patient, good Sir Andrew," cried the Bishop ; "it does indeed require a strong endurance to bear up against calumnies so foul ; but be you assured, as I said even now, that on my part no exertions shall be spared to bring the machinations of your enemy to light."

"I shall be ever most bound to your Lordship," answered Sir Andrew ; "I did, indeed, believe that you would not refuse your aid to a just cause."

"I would not indeed, my friend," replied Hoadley—"my hand and heart on all occasions for a right cause."

"Which can never be that of a Papist," remarked Blackburne, in an impetuous tone.

"We would hope not," sarcastically returned the Bishop " 'twere a pity if the cause of our foes should prove a good one."

Then, fixing upon Luntley another of those piercing looks which seemed as though they would read into his very soul, "This matter is one of deep import," he said; "who knows, Sir Andrew, what horrid charge thine enemies may next invent, if they be not at once checked in this? The plunderer of an orphan, the destroyer of a marriage certificate—what darker, more unutterable wickedness must lurk in his soul who could commit such deeds as these! Blood-guiltiness were scarcely worse."

A hideous paleness spread over the face of Sir Andrew at these words; he seemed for the moment deprived of the power to reply, and sat with his eyes fascinated, as it were, to those of Hoadley, as if he expected almost that the Bishop would next assert his own belief in that frightful imputation which it had pleased him to suppose.

It was a strange sight—the two so fixedly gazing at each other, the one with such wildness and desperation in his eyes, and the other so withering and stern.

Blackburne, who had been a silent observer of the scene, seemed scarce to understand its meaning; and, looking wonderingly from the Bishop to the Baronet, he was the first to break the strange pause, with an anxious inquiry if Sir Andrew were ill. The sound of his voice seemed to restore Luntley suddenly to himself, and the blood rushed back to his face with a violence that contrasted strongly with its late unnatural paleness. His voice, too, had its usual steadiness, as he apologized for the brief abstraction caused by his sudden indisposition, which he attributed to his late accident and his rapid journey.

A somewhat ambiguous smile played upon the Bishop's lip, as he prayed the Baronet to spare himself, and pursue the conversation, which seemed to harass him, no further. Other topics were then introduced, and shortly afterwards Sir Andrew rose to depart. He had now regained his customary self-possession: Hoadley and he seemed even as if they had arrived at a tacit understanding.

"I may then depend upon your Lordship's friendship in this

matter of the curate," said Luntley, with a meaning glance in his bright, piercing grey eyes.

"You may do so," answered the Bishop, significantly: "I, Sir Andrew, can well perceive how your honour is at stake: depend that, for the credit of their known friendship, your friends will have a care for that honour, if its preservation is among the things that may be."

With this assurance the Baronet departed: a silence of some minutes ensued, and then Hoadley turned towards the Archdeacon, with the same stern look which had more than once marked his features during the late conversation. "Brother Blackburne," he said, "yonder is a fearful man."

"He hath been, and is, an useful one," answered the other dignitary, sharply.

"Francis Blackburne," replied Hoadley, with yet more sternness, "that sufficeth not—I tell thee his breast is as a foul cistern, where poison worse than that of aspics is engendered. The terrors of guilt lie heavy on his soul, and showed in the changing red and pale of his face even while I spoke to him. Blackburne, Blackburne, by mine own eternal welfare, I do believe he knows that Emma Frankley was a wife; ay, and that her marriage certificate was destroyed by him."

"I do suspect as much," answered Blackburne; "but, Hoadley, this wrong hath been a long while wrought: it were not well that the Manor of Rodenhurst fell into the hand of a wretched Papist."

"Why, friend Blackburne," said the Bishop, ironically, "I love not the Papists myself; but thou, thou wouldst crush them *per fas aut nefas*; oh, thou shouldst have lived in the old days of glorious Queen Bess."

"Would that I had," replied Blackburne, impetuously. "My friend, thou regardest with too calm an eye the children of the Red Harlot, and our High Churchmen, who in sooth are but her stepsons! Oh, well, well is it that their power is reduced; that convocations are no more; and that our righteous ministers can hold the Church as a creature of their will."

"It may be well, friend Blackburne," answered the Bishop, "for thy principles and mine; but do not thou mistake the ministers, or thank them for aught which they do. We have with them a debtor and creditor account; our pens, our talents, push them up to power. If they have loaded me with preferments—if I hold the revenues of two rich bishoprics at once—think you I owe to the ministers a debt of gratitude for that? Oh, no; they think by my means to make the Church their tool; to represent it as a mere appendage to the State—a thing which has no vitality in itself, and is existent only according to their pleasure. But, Blackburne, they know well that the principles of the High Churchmen would sanction not this assumption, though ours may endure it for a while."

The Bishop, after uttering these words, was silent for some minutes, and an anxious, dissatisfied look was visible in his face; then he looked up. "But, friend Blackburne," he said, "God knows, too, that we act but according to the dictates of our conscience. We have sought to work good in our time: if it work for evil in a future day, surely an Eternal Mercy will hold us scathless still! And for this man, this Luntley," said the Bishop, returning to the more immediate subject of discourse, "oh, I fear me, I fear me much, he is one who will yet bring great discredit on the cause to which he is allied. I have a painful facility of reading the hearts of men, and dark, I am certain, is the catalogue of crime which his records; yet, yet, we must if possible preserve him still."

"Ay," said the more fanatical Blackburne, "at any cost, Dr. Hoadley, at any cost; but I will not believe so true a loyalist and Churchman to be so bad at heart. We must endeavour to find this Wilson, and bring him to the test ourselves."

CHAPTER IX.

"Thou art, indeed, the most comparative rascalliest,
Sweet young Princee."

HENRY IV.

It was with no very good will towards Dr. Hoadley that Sir Andrew took his way from the dwelling of that dignitary. He had been at no loss to understand, from the Bishop's manner, that he was rather more deeply read in his (Sir Andrew's) designs than was desirable. He perceived very plainly that the good Bishop was not to be relied upon as one who would unhesitatingly back any villany which it might please him to commit. Now, Sir Andrew was one of those people who, in the overflowing excess of their own vileness, cannot comprehend that any action of man or woman can by possibility proceed from an honest or honourable motive.

Thus it was that, knowing Dr. Hoadley to be a man not upon all occasions very scrupulous as to the means where ends of any importance were concerned, Sir Andrew Luntley indulged in many cynical sneers at the sudden nicety of the Bishop's conscience; imputing the coolness of the latter to any motive rather than a sincere abhorrence of such deeds as those of which it was tolerably plain he suspected the Baronet to be the perpetrator. Some comfort, however, he had administered to Sir Andrew in his parting words; he did feel that the disgrace of so prominent a partizan would bring some odium upon the party to which he belonged; he would certainly smother Sybil's claims if he could.

"Yes, yes," muttered Sir Andrew, "he will not, he dare not give me lightly up; 'tis well even that I have been recommended to the hatred of our excellent, upright, admirable Prince of Wales; surely to be in hatred with him should be of some advantage to me with the ministers, and perhaps with his own family, who daily study how they can put upon him new

insults. As to Blackburne, I am sure of him. Now, I do love the open honesty of that man ; and, where I am concerned, it shall not go unrewarded."

This, it may be safely averred, was the first time in his life that Sir Andrew Luntley ever thought of rewarding honesty; nor were his strictures upon the Bishop quite fair: but the worthy Baronet possessed, like some other people, a singular facility for discerning the mote in his neighbour's eye, while he perceived not the beam in his own. "Well," he continued with a low sneering laugh, "of this at any rate I am sure, that the most excellent and illustrious person to whom I am next bound will not flout me upon a dainty scruple of conscience, if my Lord Bishop does: the gambling table on his side, and the good red gold on mine, bind him fast to my interests."

While speaking and meditating thus, Sir Andrew had hurried at a rapid pace from Dr. Hoadley's residence, towards St. James's Park. He had not used his carriage on visiting the Bishop, for the restless, scheming mind of Luntley had begat in him a proportionate bodily restlessness, which urged him to a continual activity: thus it was only on state occasions that the magnificent equipage of the wealthy fundholder was seen at the doors of the titled and opulent, to whom, by force of his fraud, and their folly or vice, Sir Andrew had become an all-important person.

The rapid pace at which the Baronet walked soon brought him to the Palace of St. James, where he found a ready admittance. The air of the place seemed to have a sudden influence on the wily Luntley; the frown vanished from his brow, the anxious look disappeared, and nothing was visible in the face of Sir Andrew, after he crossed the threshold of St. James's, but the easy, affable smile of an experienced and favoured courtier. In reply to the low, soft-toned inquiry which he addressed to those by whom he was admitted, an attendant stepped forwards, and begged that Sir Andrew would follow him; "For his Royal Highness, Sir," said this person, "has been watching anxiously

for you all the morning, and desired that you should be admitted to him immediately on your arrival."

After this announcement, Sir Andrew was led through a magnificent suite of apartments; and, a door at the extremity of the range being thrown open, he found himself in the presence of no less illustrious a personage than William Duke of Cumberland.

One other person was with the hero of Culloden on Sir Andrew's entrance: but, ere we pause to describe that person, it is incumbent on us to say something not only of the Duke himself, but even of the apartment which he honoured by making it his habitation.

We will call it a very elegant confusion that reigned around the hero, his martial genius and avocations being gracefully signified by several huge tomes of military tactics, piled upon the ground in one corner of the room, and plentifully covered with dust, while a rich Oriental sabre, a military sash, and plumed cap, were scattered upon a large settee, with a mask and domino, a loose pack of cards, a lecture upon the noble art of boxing, and other articles too multifarious for enumeration here. As to the furniture of the apartment, it was sufficiently costly, and worthy of the rank of its occupant.

The Royal Duke was, at the moment of Sir Andrew's entrance, reclining very much at his ease upon one of the couches; before him was a table spread for breakfast, with a chocolate service of exquisite Dresden porcelain; as to the Duke himself, he was attired in a morning gown of rich brocade, and, neglecting his breakfast, was talking very eagerly to the person who was with him when Sir Andrew was announced. This latter person was a sinewy, vulgar, awkward-looking man, who stood bowing, and mumbling, and fidgeting, before the great general, as if he was in utter astonishment, and no very great ease, on finding himself in so awful a presence.

On the approach of Sir Andrew, the Duke rose, and, stretching out his arms, fairly hugged him in a most affectionate and condescending embrace. "Ah, Luntley, my dear fellow," he ex-

claimed, opening a huge pair of white eyes very wide upon the Baronet, "may I lose my head if you do not always come just at the very moment you are wanted! Here, Fritz, Fritz!" continued the Duke, calling very loud to an attendant, who forthwith made his appearance from an inner apartment, and whom he desired to bring another cup, and more chocolate for Sir Andrew.

The Royal Duke, it should be observed, had a habit, when under any excitement, of speaking very fast; and, as his voice was none of the clearest, this fast speaking made the thick, clattering accents almost unintelligible. He now forced the Baronet into a seat, and, interrupting his inquiry as to whether he might hope to have private speech with him that morning, he said, "Yes, yes, by and by, my dear friend—by and by; now, Luntley, I know you are a right down good fellow, that you like fair play for all your friends; and would you believe it, Luntley—would you believe it? I have been cheated!" cried his Royal Highness in a very thick, angry tone indeed, and pacing backwards and forwards before the Baronet with more nimbleness than grace; for, truth to tell, the hero's person was rather bulky than elegant; and his fair, florid, and generally inexpressive features, rendered his exhibition of the sterner passions more ludicrous than imposing.

"Is it possible that your Royal Highness can have been cheated?" exclaimed Sir Andrew, in a tone and with a look which combined a wonderful mixture of sympathy, indignation, and astonishment.

"Yes, Luntley," answered the Prince, with a grave air, thrusting his hands into his pockets, standing bolt upright before the Baronet, and looking him full in the face, as if to mark the effect which his words would produce: "yes, Luntley, it is so—I, even I, have been most shamefully, dishonestly, and villanously cheated; duped, gulled, bubbled—regularly and notoriously bubbled."

Having uttered this complaint, the Duke stood silent for perhaps a minute, intently gazing on the Baronet, as if to

mark in his face the extent of his sympathy: the examination was apparently satisfactory, especially when the skilful citizen crowned the commiseration of his looks with a shake of the head, and a profound sigh. "Take comfort, Luntley, take comfort," said the Duke, "I will be quits with the rascal who has cheated me yet; you shall hear! Slack, come hither."

At these words, the coarse individual before alluded to approached Sir Andrew and the Duke, the sideling, sheepish air which he exhibited somewhat oddly contrasting with the look of low sensuality and ruffianly fierceness which nature had written in very legible characters on his face.

This man was by trade a butcher, and by the force of genius an eminent prize fighter; and it was upon the plea of that genius that he had been honoured with a summons into the presence of the Duke; this celebrated hero being, in addition to his many other admirable qualities, a distinguished patron of the gentle sports of the ring.

In this character, of a patron of pugilists, it was that the Duke had been, as he called it, notoriously cheated; from which opinion, nevertheless, many competent judges were inclined to differ. Not among this number, however, was Sir Andrew Luntley, who listened with a most grave and sympathetic countenance, occasionally, too, throwing in an interjection expressive of indignation, while the Duke entered into a detail of his misfortunes; from which it appeared that the prize fighter, Broughton, whom the Duke had hitherto honoured with his support, had been lately so unfortunate as to suffer a defeat in a contest with Slack, to whom, in consequence, the Duke had forthwith transferred his favour, bitterly protesting at the same time that he had been "sold," as he termed it, by Broughton, upon whom he had ventured very heavy bets. The truth was, this wretched man had been completely blinded by the first blow he had received from Slack; and while the Duke, who feared for the loss of his money, called out vehemently to know what he was about, all the cry of Broughton was, that he could not see his antagonist. The misfortune by which he was

defeated went for nothing, in the opinion of the—we must call him—brutal Prince, who bitterly protested that Broughton, aware of the large sums which he had staked upon the chance of his success, had been induced by those against whom he had betted to enter into a compact to lose the fight, and had thus sold his patron.

“But I have done with him—I have done with him, Luntley,” cried the Duke. “Slack shall be my man for the future: look at him, Luntley, is he not a noble-sized fellow? Why, his fist, I do believe, would fell one of his own oxen. Have a care, though, Slack—have a care,” continued the Duke, addressing that worthy; “no tricks like Broughton’s—no selling me again; it will not do, my man—it will not do.”

The amiable Mr. Slack bowed in deference to this announcement, with about as much grace as might distinguish a bear when first learning to dance; and then, in the endeavour to clear his voice to speak in so august a presence, he produced a sound not very distantly resembling that which proceeds from the throat of the same animal, a sound anything but musical, and varying between a grunt and a snarl. Mr. Slack looked from the Baronet to the Prince, and from the Prince to the Baronet, and his red face got very red indeed: then he spoke—“May it please your Right Honorable Royal Highness, I am a plain-spoken sort of a man, and I hates all the world—I does; saving your Royal Highness’s presence, I should like to see everybody hanged—rot them, I should; I despises everybody, and I likes to show them how they can be banded by a true man.”

An expression of very sublime contempt elevated the short, thick, turned-up nose of Mr. Slack at these words; and the utterance of his amiable and philanthropic opinions seeming to put him in greater confidence with himself, and on more equal terms with his distinguished patron, he went on: “I likes punching, and fighting, and boxing, I say, because I hates and despises mankind; I despises them for their baseness and ingratitude—I despises such a man as Broughton, and I hope as your Royal Highness will not be offended by that.”

Considering the sore state of his Royal Highness's feelings with regard to that individual, it was not likely such an assertion would offend him; and he intimated as much, by which intimation the misanthropic Mr. Slack was not perhaps altogether surprised; he went on, however, in the following disinterested strain: "And it is not for the lucre of gold only as I would be your Royal Highness's true man; but because I hates mankind, and I likes to punish them for their perfidiousness and all sorts of vileness; and I likes a great name in the ring, because then, when I walks along the streets, I can pretend, as if by accident, I shoved people down, or tread upon their toes, or give them a sly kick, and they must pocket it all, and sneak off, and does n't dare to be affronted, because why, they hear as I am Slack the prize fighter. And, if I had been in Broughton's place, I would not have played a false trick on your Royal Highness, because, do you see, there would have been a score of men made savage, if your Royal Highness had won; and your Royal Highness has all the savageness to yourself, now that you have lost: and it is better at any time to make twenty men wrath than one, barring even that that one may be a right earnest good patron."

These excellent arguments which Mr. Slack urged in favour of his future fidelity to the cause—that is, the purse—of the Duke, were so far satisfactory to that distinguished person, that, much to Sir Andrew's annoyance, he detained the butcher some time longer to expatiate upon what he would do for him, if he found him indeed the gallant fellow which he admitted that he had reason to believe him. Once the anxious Baronet ventured to remind his Royal Highness that he had, by his own appointment, visited him to talk of other matters; but he was interrupted by an impatient wave of the Duke's hand, and a "Yes, yes, my dear fellow, I know all that; we will talk of that, by and by; but you see what I have upon my hands; you see how I have been sold."

At length, however, the butcher was dismissed; but the Prince might not perhaps have been altogether delighted, had

he overheard his soliloquy, as he strode through the Park, his fingers fumbling over the gold in his pocket, while he muttered, in a very discontented tone, "And I hates and despises him, too—I does: a precious, pitiful, paltry present for a Royal Highness! I would not be his man at all, if it was n't that it will make a many fellows savage to hear me called so; burn him—I should like to kick him, too, I should, though he is a Duke and a Prince; ha, ha! it would be famous sport to kick and punch a Prince and a Duke, it would—it would—it would; oh, I should like that, I should like to beat a dozen Dukes!"

This admirable fancy roused Mr. Slack to such an extraordinary degree of merriment, that his uproarious laughter greatly alarmed a young lady, who was passing through the park with her brother, a youth of some sixteen years of age, and who thought the man was either mad or drunk; whereupon Mr. Slack, as nobody happened to be near, kissed the girl, and boxed the boy's ears, and then strode off, telling them first, with an air, that he was Mr. Slack, the famous prize fighter, "*what* was patronized by his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland!"

The Duke, meanwhile, had condescended at last to attend to the principal subject of Sir Andrew's visit, by whom he had been previously, by letter, possessed of as much knowledge of the Baronet's intrigues with regard to the Rodenhurst property as that crafty person thought it prudent to bestow upon him.

Now, when the subject was introduced again, and Sir Andrew ventured to express his hope that the all-powerful Duke would oppose his influence to the designs of the false and traitorous Squire of Draycot, he was abruptly interrupted by the Prince, who seemed to dislike circumlocution where a matter of real business was on hand: "Tut, tut," he exclaimed, breaking in upon the hypocritical defences of Sir Andrew—"tut, tut, man, you may rely upon me; what! if all this fine story that you say your foes are fabricating were true, do you think William of Cumberland would be the man to turn his back upon a good honest Whig for that? Not I, Sir Andrew; where Papist, Jacobite,

High Churchman, or Tory is concerned, not I, if you had dissolved fifty marriages, and burned a hundred certificates—there, that will do, let us have no more about it. But, Sir Andrew, my good fellow, you really must advance me a couple of thousands; I was stripped at the hazard table last night, despoiled of my last shilling; and then, too, there is the affair of this infernal Broughton; and, you know, Luntley, that my purse is at all times most abominably low. I am sure you will admit that I am vilely treated; what was the twenty-five thousand pounds that the rascally Commons added to my income after the affair of Culloden? It ought to have been fifty at least; for you know, Luntley, what a sorry condition the dogs would have been in, if Charles had made his way to London; where would have been their funds, Sir Andrew? and how many of them might have looked to be graced with a halter? No, there never was a man more vilely and ungratefully used than I have been—five-and-twenty thousand a year, indeed! what is five-and-twenty thousand!”

With these words, the poor Duke threw himself back upon his couch, and, pouring out a fresh cup of chocolate, sweetened and drank it with a most melancholy air, as properly befitted a man so exceedingly ill-treated.

Sir Andrew, of course, fully coincided with his pathetic complaints: but, once more reverting to his own affairs, he ventured to remind the Duke that Prince Frederick was in the Tory interest, and indeed a personal friend of Lord Aumerle.

A look of more intelligence than was usual to the somewhat heavy features of William of Cumberland passed over them at the mention of his brother's name—accompanied withal by an expression which a severe observer might have said savoured in some degree of downright malice. “My dear Luntley,” said the Duke, putting out his hand with the air of a dainty fine lady whose nerves have been shocked, “do not, I pray you, intrude the name of that crazed and most disagreeable person, the Prince of Wales, upon any conversation which you may have with me: really his derelictions from filial duty, his general

conduct towards our excellent father—his association with that little, ugly, malicious villain, the poet Pope, and that truly horrible and awful Lord Bolingbroke—make the very mention of his name oppressive to my nerves. I am sure, as I told the King very honestly the other day, I always did dislike Prince Frederick, even when we were children, and considered him a most troublesome, unnecessary sort of person, created merely for the purposes of annoyance and mischief, and his Majesty fully admits that I was right: and I am sure these have always been my feelings with regard to the Prince of Wales.”

The Duke need not have been at the trouble to repeat this assertion, as it was one the truth of which Sir Andrew Luntley would not have been for one moment inclined to dispute; it was sufficiently obvious that he might consider the person who stood between himself and the prospect of possessing three kingdoms as indeed very troublesome and unnecessary.

“I can truly sympathize with the feelings of your Royal Highness,” said Sir Andrew, and in this he too spoke the perfect truth; for with the annoyances of one who grudged to an apparent heir his fortunate position the Baronet was only too well acquainted.

“Ah, my dear Sir Andrew,” cried the Duke with a most dismal sound, something between a sigh and a groan, “you do not indeed know half the vexations to which I have been subjected by that odious Frederick: I am certain there is not an action of his life in which he does not purposely, with a malice aforethought as the lawyers have it, seek to distress my dear father and myself. Just think now, Sir Andrew, of what he has done, of what he is doing; he knows that we detest poets, and painters, and all such miserable wretched creatures; and, not contented with setting himself up as the especial patron of those odious, saucy vagabonds, who never have left, and I suppose never will leave their betters alone—not content, I say, with this the Prince of Wales, in addition to associating with these men of letters, as they are called, must even go the length, forsooth,

of pretending to learning himself, as if he were one of their number: it is truly disgraceful—is it not, Luntley?”

A very ready assent to these sage observations was accorded by the complaisant Baronet, and the Duke went on bewailing the literary predilections of his brother in a most pathetic strain. “Was there ever anything more absurd,” he said, “than for the Prince of Wales to pore over a set of musty books, like a poor half-starved devil in a garret? If a Prince is to be pestered with learning, who may be a dunce, I should like to know?”

“Who, indeed?” ejaculated Sir Andrew.

“Well,” resumed the Duke, with a sententious, moralizing air, “these you see, my dear friend, are fortune’s chances: she is blind indeed! Had she not been so, the Prince of Wales would have been surely born to get his living by his wits, and I am sure I should not in that case have interfered with his heritage.”

This, Sir Andrew thought, was a self-evident truth; but any reply which he might have made to this declaration was prevented by the continued grumbling complaints of the Prince, who had hit, in his brother, upon a subject of annoyance upon which he was inclined to be rather prolix: the amiable Duke seemed to feel, too, that there was something of a real sympathy of soul existing between himself and the Baronet, and was generally disposed to be very confidential in his society. “The Prince of Wales,” he said, “is, you may be assured, Sir Andrew, a poor, mean-spirited fellow altogether, laying himself out eternally for popularity—that was why he refused Walpole’s offer of paying his debts in forty-one; and that is the reason of the monstrous jealousy which I am well assured he entertains towards myself; heigho, fortune’s blindness, as I said before! But I do think, Luntley, the Prince is himself aware of one who has the fitting qualities of a king about him.”

The Duke fell into a reverie after this remark, during which the wily Baronet intently regarded him as he sat with his eyes

cast down, and the shadows of discontent, it might be, too, of envy, and an unbridled ambition, lowering on his face. A pause of a few minutes ensued; perhaps the citizen was calculating the probable causes of the Prince's sudden silence, and thinking how bold a remark he might venture, how strong a dose of flattery he might administer. He prefaced his observation with a sigh, and a look of most melancholy regret. "Yes," he exclaimed, "we have indeed a model of what the Prince of Wales ought to be; but, in sooth, your Royal Highness, it does but make thinking men sad, to perceive one who is so eminently calculated to govern so far removed from the chance of succession."

The countenance of the Duke had brightened at the implied compliment in the beginning of Sir Andrew's speech; but his looks fell considerably at its close.

"Yet," cried the Baronet, "life is most uncertain"—the Duke smiled again—"and the Prince of Wales," pursued Sir Andrew, "does not enjoy the most robust constitution."

The Duke looked sharply up, and seemed for a moment to hesitate whether he should speak or not; something, however, there was in the glance of Sir Andrew's eye which seemed to assure him that he was not mistaken in his man, and that he need not be at any extraordinary trouble of disguise; consequently, there was a very honest, unequivocal family hatred expressed in the looks and tones of the Royal Duke, as he replied—"But there is the boy, you know, Luntley—the mischievous urchin—who has such provoking good health."

Sir Andrew smiled. "It may be so at present," he said; "but health, your Royal Highness, is a possession no more secure than life, especially in persons of very exalted rank. Oh, believe me, gracious Duke, that young heirs often suddenly become sickly: their sickness has proved a nation's hope before now, and may do so again."

A dark flush overspread the countenance of the Duke at these words: he drew his breath heavily, and, fixing his eyes with an

earnest look upon the Baronet, he almost gaspingly inquired what he meant.

"Simply, your Royal Highness, that which I have said," returned Luntley, in something of a sneering tone—"if it please you, I will repeat my words: I say, that young heirs are sometime seized with sudden sickness; and well it is for the hopes of those who would wisely place governments, and titles, and rich estates, in the hands of men, vigorous in talent and mature in age, that the health of these baby heirs is, indeed, a matter of exceeding insecurity."

Here the Baronet again paused, and the Duke looked anxiously in his face, as though expecting or desirous that he would speak further; but Sir Andrew managed to throw into his features a dogged and imperturbable expression, which told the Duke, as plainly as words could have done, that Luntley considered that he had spoken quite enough, and to a very sufficient purpose, and now waited for his companion to speak in his turn.

This conduct seemed somewhat to embarrass his Royal Highness; for he made more than one hesitating effort at speech, and halted after an unintelligible mutter of some half dozen words; then, breaking into a short, uneasy kind of laugh, he exclaimed—"Well, Luntley, I do believe, the more I see of you, that you are a right down earnest good fellow!" Then the Duke fell into another musing fit. "Ah," he exclaimed, after a pause of some minutes, "I will see you soon again, Luntley, soon again: there is more than one trifling matter on which I should like your advice: and be assured of this, my dear, excellent friend, all shall go right for you with his Majesty, and the ministers, about your affairs with these rascal Tories. But, Luntley, you will not forget the two thousand pounds: I really must have them, my dear fellow—I must indeed."

"Your Royal Highness shall have the sum, in good hard gold, before to-night," said the Baronet, with an air of exultation; "and twice as much when Harry Draycot is in gaol."

The Duke laughed. "Is that so great a point, Sir Andrew?"

he inquired; "would you give me so much to be avenged upon a pitiful Squire?"

Sir Andrew, who had risen to quit the presence of his patron, turned sharply towards him at these words: his lips trembled as from some strong and absolutely uncontrollable emotion: such a frown as he wore on his parting with Lord Fitzwarine was on his brow, and the same keen, basilisk look in his deep-set eyes, glistening like steel. "Ever illustrious and Royal Duke," he said, in a bitter, sarcastic tone, "had it been your hap to behold one man for ever place himself in the path of your fortune, of your peace; to conquer all else, yet ever to be baulked and trampled down by him; to mount an eminence proud enough, but be pushed back from one yet more lofty—if you had felt one man—one man—for ever thrusting himself betwixt you and the dearer objects of your ambition, then you would feel how all-important he may become; what a strength of hatred may grow in one's heart; how all the world, even, seems of nothing worth, in compare with crushing that one being whom fortune has placed above you! If such an one, gracious Prince, had ever stood in the path of your greatness, then might you understand how a man can hate."

The Duke laughed again. "Nay, good Sir Andrew," he said, "it is not so difficult to understand you; but put thine heart at rest about this Draycot, in so far as I am concerned: why, man, thou shouldst have leave to gibbet him for me."

Satisfied, as he well might be, with this most comfortable assurance, the Baronet took leave of his royal friend, and, on quitting the Palace, took the way towards his own residence in Soho-square. The day was now considerably advanced—for the illustrious Prince was no favourer of early rising, and it had been past noon before he left his bed. The fogs, too, which in the earlier part of the morning had crept only along the surface of the river, now filled the streets, and rendered them disagreeably dark, and somewhat dangerous—for London had then no side pavements, and the foot passengers had to make their way amid the throng of vehicles—and this heavy fog had made the rough,

uneven pavement, an insecure footing both for man and beast. It was not, however, so dense, but that way could be made through it without the assistance of torches, though some few sedans and coaches were preceded by them, and candles and the oil lamps in use at the time, had been kindled in the shops.

Sir Andrew, on leaving the Palace, had taken his way towards the Strand, in order to call on his banker ; and now, as he neared the labyrinth of houses which at that time surrounded St. Martin's Church, the uproar of a somewhat angry assemblage of persons met his ears. As he still approached, he perceived a considerable crowd gathered round a carriage which had been overturned ; and, pushing among them, by the light of some torches which were held by various bystanders, he perceived a young man in a rich laced dress, with his wig awry, and his person plastered from head to foot with mud, as though he had been literally rolled in the wet and dirty streets, standing with a very rueful countenance in a sort of bondage between a couple of men, who, to judge by their attire and general appearance, were artisans of the lowest class.

The gentleman in bondage was, it was easy to discover, even amid the disgrace of his present deplorable plight, a dandy of the first water : his sword was hilted with silver, his cravat and ruffles of fine lace, and his unfortunate coat of bright yellow velvet, lined with white satin. The horses had been taken out of the carriage, and the servants of the beau seemed to have left him to his fate : sundry efforts did he make at an escape, which, however, he might as well have spared ; for the poor gentleman was singularly slight and effeminate, and his endeavours to wrest himself from the grasp of the powerful mechanics were about as effectual as would have been those of an infant. He was not deficient in expostulations, lavishing entreaties and oaths upon his captors with an equal success, his shrill, womanish voice, mixing very ineffectively with the deeper and more powerful accents of a young man, who was haranguing the mob, from the top of the broken carriage.

The voice of this person at once arrested Sir Andrew's atten-

tion, for he had the felicity of numbering the speaker among his personal acquaintance : the close of his brilliant address, however was all that met Sir Andrew's ears. "Hurra, my friends! the people for ever!" cried the orator; "roll him in the mud again, turn his coat inside out, and then let him go: what! is the majesty of the people to be insulted? If a pole was knocked through his carriage in the fog, is he to jump out, and shake his patrician fist in your faces! Spoil his civet for him—give him another roll in the mud."

. An extravagant shout of laughter hailed this address, amid which the voice of the discomfited beau was heard, vainly screaming, "I'll punish you all for this! I'll have you before a magistrate: I am Squire Richard Frankley, of Herefordshire, and I'll punish you all for this ill-usage."

This announcement was followed by a renewed burst of laughter, in which the orator and a young man who stood beside the carriage most noisily joined. Meantime the malicious suggestion of the former individual would in all probability have been complied with, had not a cry of "The Bow-street officers!" been raised on the skirts of the crowd. Forthwith the demagogue exclaimed, "Ah, the devil! Churchill, let us be off!" and, leaping with an extraordinary agility from his elevated position, he seized his friend by the arm, and commenced pushing his way through the crowd, who on their part favoured his escape: as for the beau, who was now released, he raised his voice louder than before, screaming out, "This way—this way, officers! Seize the man who is as ugly as the devil!" In the confusion that now ensued, Sir Andrew was thrust back, and, in his endeavours to make his way through the crowd, found himself suddenly confronting a tall thin man, whose figure was slightly bent either by age or ill health. The links which were flaring over the heads of the mob fully discovered the pale, careworn countenance of this person to Sir Andrew and, uttering a loud cry, a yell almost, of astonishment and horror, he grasped him by the arm, exclaiming, "Thou art Wilson!"

The next moment, however, they were wrenched apart by a

heavy rush of the crowd; and two persons, violently seizing Sir Andrew by either arm, dragged him, despite his oaths and resistance, across the street, and down a wretched court at the top of St. Martin's-lane. At the end of this court a miserable oil lamp was fastened against a wall; this lamp had been kindled within the last quarter of an hour; and, the captors of Sir Andrew pausing beneath it, one of them exclaimed, in the voice of the orator, "Hey-day! why, Luntley, old fellow, are you mad, that you abuse your friends in that way? Come along now; Churchill and I are going to dine with a dozen brave fellows, who will drink deep first, and play hard afterwards."

As the young man spoke, he and his companion still held Sir Andrew under the lamp, the light of which, falling full on the head of the orator, revealed a countenance, the least deformity of which, perhaps, was a truly diabolical squint; but, though at that time scarcely past his twentieth year, John Wilkes could already boast of that plenitude of ugliness which was afterwards immortalized by the pencil of Hogarth, while his late trifling display of eloquence was no unfair specimen of the patriotism which made him so greatly notorious in after years.

But, whatever were the terms on which Sir Andrew Luntley commonly admitted Mr. Wilkes and his companion, the profligate poet Churchill, to his society, he was by no means inclined to treat them to any extraordinary show of courtesy at that particular moment; for his mind was occupied but by one horrible consciousness, that Wilson, the curate Wilson, really lived, was then in London, had his fortune, almost his life, in his hands, had been seen and recognised by him, and had escaped his grasp.

Maddened by these convictions, which presented themselves to his mind in one moment of overwhelming horror, Sir Andrew stamped in impotent rage, and, pouring the bitterest execrations upon Wilkes and Churchill, broke from them, and fled with a frantic rapidity towards the Strand, in the vain hope of yet discovering some trace of the weak and unfortunate curate.

CHAPTER X.

"Reverend Sirs,
 For you there's rosemary and rue ; these keep
 Seeming and savour all the winter long.
 Now, my fairest friend,
 I would I had some flowers o' the spring, that might
 Become your time of day.
 Daffodils,
 That come before the swallow dares, and take
 The winds of March with beauty ; violets, dim,
 But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
 Or Cytherea's breath ; pale primroses,
 That die unmarried, ere they can behold
 Bright Phœbus in his strength."

THE WINTER'S TALE.

It was about ten days after the interview between Sir Andrew Luntley and his royal patron, that a gay party were assembled in an old-fashioned pleasure house or pavilion in the garden of Mr. Draycot's mansion in Staffordshire.

Though the season had yet advanced only to the beginning of April, the morning had that delicious, summer-like softness which more properly appertains to the month of June, but which the very variableness of our climate sometimes favours us with at a much earlier period of the year.

The pleasure house alluded to stood on an artificial mound at the end of a long stone terrace, and commanded an entire view, not only of the pleasure gardens, but also of a portion of the park, from which they were there separated only by a low wall, which the summerhouse overlooked. The clump of trees, which in summer perfectly veiled this building with their luxuriant foliage, was chiefly composed of walnut and almond trees, and the boughs of the former were now hung with those brown tassels which appear before the tree bursts into leaf at a somewhat advanced period of the spring ; the almond trees were

however, fully arrayed in a garment of their delicate pink blossoms; and the birds, attracted by the fragrance of these flowers, no less than by the genial warmth and beauty of the morning, were hopping in great numbers among the boughs; a thin veil of green, too, seemed drawn over the gardens and the park from the tender buds, which covered not only the plants and thickets in the flower garden, but the tall forest trees in the park beyond. To the right of the pleasure house stretched the long stone terrace, in the centre of which was a fountain, whose waters dashed merrily in the sunbeams; while the parterres in front of the pavilion were gay with the purple and yellow crocus, the delicate snowdrop, the early daisy, the scarlet ranunculus, and the harebell.

The perfume and beauty of fresh flowers, too, were in the pavilion itself, where Lady Anne and Sybil Mandeville sat, each having before her a large basket filled with white hothouse roses, and another smaller basket piled up with the pretty sweet-scented thyme and sprigs of bitter rue.

The companions of the young ladies were Lord Fitzwarine and the younger Harry Draycot, with Mr. Curzon and Alice Morland.

"Now," exclaimed Sybil with a merry laugh, and pausing in her task of turning the white roses into garlands, with knots of the rue and thyme—"now suppose, dear friends, instead of these delicate roses and this unsavoury rue, I bind for our kind Squire of Draycot, and mine own venerated Father Lawson, a tuft of those fair golden crocuses; surely they would prize them much, as the rich colour may make them stand well instead of those orange lilies which my father and the Squire so highly prize."

"And, if you give crocuses to my father with such a recommendation, Miss Mandeville," observed Harry Draycot, laughing, "I fear that his hatred of the Orange usurper will even overcome his gallantry and devotion to your fair self, and he will reject, with some contempt, flowers offered even by you upon such terms."

"And what penance severe enough would Father Lawson invent?" inquired Mr. Curzon.

"Truly," replied Lord Fitzwarine, "I at least will not attempt even to imagine. Since I discovered last week that poor Miss Mandeville was condemned always to fast on the birthday of our gracious king, I do not attempt to pursue Mr. Lawson's antipathies to the House of Hanover."

"Dear my Lord," said Alice Morland, "that is quite an old custom of Father Lawson. Since the hour that he assumed the office of a parent to Sybil, he has insisted that both myself and the child should, in his company, fast on all occasions of the Government feasting, and feast when it recommended a fast."

"Well, then," said Mr. Curzon, "Miss Mandeville was not, after all, a great loser of enjoyment by the good father's decrees."

"So please you, Reverend Sir, but I was," answered Sybil. "Whigs and Low Churchmen are not in general any favourers of fasting; oh, that is why they are so popular, I suppose, among parish beadies, churchwardens, and fat citizens. Now, I should think, Sir, that your worthy Rector of Draycot is not one who would often have given me a plea for a feast by keeping or even ordering a fast."

"Why, I must admit, young lady," answered Mr. Curzon, "that our Rector of Draycot is not much devoted to fasting: at least, upon his own account."

"Ah, then, see you not, Sir," said Sybil, "that I owe my dear father the crocuses out of pure revenge."

"But, revenge is not a pure passion, Miss Mandeville," returned Curzon; "and I cannot, in my own character, license any of its proceedings."

"No, no, we will spare them all," interrupted Lady Anne; "for do we not owe our charming pun of the white rose *rueing* the sad *time* in which it now blooms to dear Mr. Lawson? I must really offer myself as his defender: you know that my father says that I am a treacherous, malignant little Jacobite at heart; and, truly, I will own that I never envied woman save

Flora Macdonald ; and, in spite even of my Jacobitism, I dearly love Prince Frederick, Guelph though he be, for showing, by his visit to her, how finely he appreciated that noble woman ; and for all these weighty reasons, dear Sybil, I will, of my own authority, impose upon you a penance for daring even to propose to put an Hanoverian trick upon Mr. Lawson."

"Pray, your Ladyship, let the penance be a mild one," said Sybil.

"Nay," returned Lady Anne, "it is but to sing to my brother, and these gentlemen, those verses which Mrs. Morland told me you wrote long ago to bewail the fallen fortunes of the white rose."

"In truth, dear Lady," replied Sybil, blushing, "I would willingly oblige you, but my voice would falter strangely without my harp to sustain its tones."

"Oh," said Lady Anne, laughing, "I have you fast, fair damsel, and in my great wisdom foresaw that excuse ; therefore, when Miss Draycot proposed that we should come hither to enjoy this beautiful morning, I bade good Bateman see that we were preceded by your harp : no more delay, then, if it please you ; the verses I am determined to have."

With these words, Lady Anne rose, and drew a harp from behind some drapery that hung before a window of the pleasure house.

Sybil, on her part, had really no disposition to sing the lines which her enthusiasm had led her to write, either in presence of Mr. Curzon or Lord Fitzwarine ; as regards the latter, indeed, she had but the day before severely lectured herself for the high esteem in which she was conscious that she held his opinion, and urged to her own mind sundry weighty reasons wherefore she should rate young Harry Draycot at least as highly as his noble friend : in spite, however, of this excellent logic, Sybil found herself in the evening seated as usual by Lord Fitzwarine, and as usual fascinated by his conversation into a total forgetfulness of the remainder of the company ; in recollecting this piece of exceeding folly, Sybil at once perceived that

she ought not to consider it a matter of any consequence whether the young nobleman admired her verses or not ; and, drawing her harp towards her, she complied with his sister's request. A few low, melancholy chords introduced the symphony of that air, in a plaintive minor key, to which Sybil had adapted the lines bemoaning the altered fortunes of that royal race whom every prejudice of education had rendered dear to her young heart. Well, too, was she skilled to draw forth from the instrument those long-sustained notes which harmonized so well with the deep and rich, but still most liquid melody of her voice. The heart, too, of the young singer was in her song ; and the melancholy that gathered in her dark eyes, the occasional faltering even of her mellow tones, perhaps, bestowed a charm on both the music and the words which was not intrinsically their own. At any rate—whether it was in the song itself, or in the power of the songstress, that the real fascination existed—certain it is, that the hearers of Sybil hung entranced upon every accent, and every note, as though they had never before heard sounds so sadly sweet, as, bending gracefully over her harp, she warbled her

LAMENT FOR THE WHITE ROSE.

I.

Rose, gentle rose ! thine early buds were twining
Above the light hearts of the young and brave ;
Thy full-blown flowers may prove in their declining
Emblems to strew on many a timeless grave.

II.

Rose, pallid rose ! too oft in ancient story
For those who loved thee but a badge of woe,
The sons of York ne'er won thee sadder glory,
Than fierce Culloden shall henceforth bestow.

III.

Though o'er that plain red-eyed Revenge went reeling,
Drunk with the purple life-stream flowing there,
Pity, to ages yet unborn appealing,
Makes his the infamy who could not spare.

IV.

And Memory, too, thy spotless leaves enwreathing
 With the wild weeds that deck her tresses free,
 As holiest spells for honour, is bequeathing
 Their names, poor pallid rose, who bled for thee.

V.

Though day by day, in this cold world declining,
 Faith seems some vision of a pleasant sleep,
 Sad Memory in her shadowy cave reclining,
 O'er those dear cherished names shall smile and weep ;

VI.

Or, o'er the mist-clad hills of Albyn roaming,
 With Fancy, sister sorceress, at her side,
 Mark in the noontide beam, or azure gloaming,
 The clans arraying them in martial pride ;

VII.

The light of loyalty around them sparkling,
 To guide their weary march o'er field and flood,
 Too soon, alas ! to glimmer wan, and darkling,
 For ever stifled in a tide of blood.

VIII.

Then Memory, tender Memory, ever dreaming
 With lingering sadness over times gone by,
 Shall turn from where that meteor light was beaming,
 O'er Stuart's withered rose to bend and sigh.

Whatever compliments the courtesy or real pleasure of her hearers might possibly have lavished upon Sybil were somewhat rudely interrupted by a grating, croaking laugh at the door of the summerhouse, which was standing open : and, looking up, Sybil was somewhat startled to perceive silly Jemmy gazing at the party with a grin upon his face, the malevolence of which would not have disgraced the infernal parent whom he was so desirous to claim. "Give ye good morrow, gentle lords and ladies," he said, stepping, unbidden, just within the doorway. "Hey, Master Harry, kind, gracious Master Harry, they say at

the Manor House it is your birthday: give poor Jemmy something for a remembrance, and he will tell you a secret, Master Harry."

"Get out of the way with thy secret, sirrah," answered young Draycot, who was somewhat angered by the idiot's sudden and disagreeable intrusion. "If thou dost not keep at more decorous distance, Jemmy, I will see that you are forbidden the precincts of the Manor House altogether."

"Master Harry will be sorry for these hard words," said the idiot; "oh, oh, he will be sorry. But will the great lord meet Jemmy to-morrow morning by the hazel copse, on the road to the great town of London? He has a secret for him, too."

"A secret for me, Jemmy," said Lord Fitzwarine, to whom the latter portion of this speech was addressed; "surely you can tell me your secret as well if you come up to the Manor, as by my meeting you at the hazel copse."

"The great lord will meet Jemmy," said the idiot, with a kind of triumphant air; "oh, oh, before to-morrow morning, Master Harry will be sorry that he shut his ears to Jemmy's secret; and then the great lord will think it worth his while to meet me; oh, oh, they say experience makes fools wise: perhaps, by that count, poor Jemmy will be wise himself some day."

With these words, accompanied by a sullen scowl, silly Jemmy turned from the summerhouse; the voice of Lady Anne, however, induced Harry Draycot to arrest his steps. "Dear Mr. Draycot," she said, "I pray you indulge my weakness so far as to call that strange being back; there is something to me both fearful and earnest in his manner; surely he has in his keeping some secret which affects you nearly."

At this apprehension young Draycot laughed, but forthwith called the idiot back; he returned sullenly, and stood frowning darkly upon Harry, while he was asked what price he put upon his important secret. "Jemmy will not tell his secret now," said the idiot, with a dogged air; "Master Harry should have listened to him before. But the great lord will hear him speak

to-morrow ; oh, he will find good reason not to laugh at poor Jemmy before then. Oh, oh, what a merry birthday Master Harry will have—what dancing and feasting at the Manor House to-night ! see, see, yonder comes Master Simon Turner, to begin the sports ; good bye, Master Harry—good bye : Jemmy would not spoil your merriment.”

With these words, the idiot sprang off the steps of the summerhouse, on which he had stood while speaking, and, bounding over the smooth turf which spread before it, leaped the low garden wall, and fled across the park with that rapidity for which he was celebrated.

“ I’ faith,” said Harry Draycot, who had advanced towards the door, “ the rogue speaks but truth ; yonder indeed comes that rascal Turner : now, how dares the varlet intrude on our grounds ? I will summon the grooms to horsewhip him for his insolence.”

“ Stay, stay, Master Harry,” said Curzon, rising, and placing his hand on the arm of the impatient young man ; “ let me prevail on you to hear quietly what this man has to say : be assured that he is too well versed in all the mean annoyances of the law to have ventured upon your father’s demesne without good warrant.”

“ As you will, Sir,” replied Harry ; “ but indeed I believe that Master Turner has, after all, very little regard even for the forms of law in his proceedings, many of which, I am persuaded, are decidedly illegal : the knave presumes upon his alliance with men who are among the basest tools of our corrupt government.”

“ And, therefore, Harry,” said Lord Fitzwarine, “ it is the part of a prudent man to use some caution in dealing even with a person in his individual character so contemptible. I think that the ladies had better return to the Manor House ; and you and I will meet the fellow, along with Mr. Curzon.”

The ladies, who had now finished binding the garlands of white roses, rue, and thyme, which they designed to wear themselves, and to distribute among the guests at the ball, with

which young Draycot's birthday was to be celebrated, immediately rose to comply with the suggestion of Lord Fitzwarine; their intention, however, was frustrated; for at that moment one of the gardeners came hastily running up, out of breath, to announce that Mr. Turner, and two other persons by whom he was accompanied, had forced their way into the garden, asserting that they were the bearers of a summons to young Mr. Draycot; and had boasted that Farmer Ashley had that morning been laid under arrest, upon charges brought against him by Sir Andrew Luntley, not only for feloniously breaking the peace, by aiding and abetting the masked individuals who had ploughed up Mr. Turner's lawn, but also for crimes of a far more serious character. This announcement, so hastily and incautiously made, at once banished the red rose from the cheeks of Lady Anne; she sank almost motionless upon a seat, and, as Master Turner and his companions were then within a hundred paces of the summerhouse, Alice Morland thought it better to comply with the young lady's earnest request of remaining there, till it was discovered what this ill-intentioned man wanted with Mr. Draycot.

Meanwhile Simon advanced, smirking, bowing, and grimacing, with what might be termed a most insolent civility; his companions were two rough, vulgar looking men, to whom he addressed himself as follows, ere he entered the summerhouse, and in a tone sufficiently loud to reach the ears of its occupants: "Now, my good fellows, Jobson and Higgins, you will keep, if you please, just at my elbow; for, truly, it is a dangerous office to deliver; according to the directions of the law, this summons into the hands of Mr. Harry Draycot, for he is one who holds not the majesty of the law in sufficient respect; and I have no doubt it would give him exceeding pleasure, to fracture my skull, while engaged in executing my duty in delivering into his hands this summons."

Having finished this harangue, which was pronounced with his back turned towards the occupants of the pavilion, and with the sole purpose of irritating the at no time very phlegmatic

Harry Draycot, Mr. Turner vouchsafed to throw upon that gentleman the full light of his amiable and intellectual countenance, "Yes, Mr. Harry Draycot," he said, "I have no doubt, no doubt whatever that it would give you exceeding pleasure to knock me down."

"You rascal!" answered Harry, "if you do not at once declare your errand and begone, you shall find that to knock you down is a pleasure which I will not long deny myself."

"There, there, did I not say so, did I not say so?" said Mr. Turner, turning triumphantly to his followers; "did I not say that this man would commit a further breach of the peace, that he would presume even to threaten a servant of the law in the execution of his duty; and now, my men, you hear that he does threaten me, he has threatened me; he coolly and advisedly avows his disposition to knock me down."

Hereupon Curzon interposed between the lawyer and Harry, who, he plainly perceived, was suffering his indignation to get the better of his prudence, and therefore disposed literally to gratify Mr. Turner by the execution of his threat. "Mr. Turner," said the clergyman, with a mild and dignified air, "there is no one here—neither Mr. Draycot nor any other person—who is disposed to prevent your execution of your real duty; at the same time you must be reminded that that duty does not consist in tempting a gentleman, by insolent taunts, into a breach of the peace. Neither, I presume, does the law furnish you with any authority to annoy and terrify these ladies; therefore, unless, in compliance with Mr. Draycot's desire, you immediately declare your errand, and take your departure, I shall feel myself quite justified in aiding to thrust you immediately, as a daring trespasser, from the demesne."

"Oh! the ladies, Sir, certainly, the ladies," said Mr. Turner, with just such a grimace as a monkey makes through the bars of his cage—"certainly, Sir, I am a man, a gentleman, I hope; I would not terrify the ladies for the world. Lady Anne Fitzwarine, I believe, Sir, and Miss—Miss—" and here, with an insolent sneer, the lawyer turned towards Sybil, while he exclaimed, "and Miss Sybil Frankley, I believe, or, by courtesy, Miss

Mandeville, the young lady who puts forward a claim to some trifling estates in the county of Worcester, hitherto supposed to appertain to my honourable friend, Sir Andrew Luntley."

Fire flashed from the eyes of the indignant Sybil at this daring insult; but Lord Fitzwarine, stepping before her, at one stride approached the lawyer near enough to seize him by the collar, and bestowed upon him a shake which nearly deprived the pursy Mr. Turner of all future power of respiration: as soon, indeed, as he could get breath, he screamed to his myrmidons for assistance, which they, being acquainted with the rank of Lord Fitzwarine, thought proper to decline bestowing.

"You will execute your duty, sirrah," said Lord Fitzwarine, sternly, and still keeping his hold on the collar of the trembling, cowering lawyer. "But, as I am well assured that no part of that authorizes you to offer insults to Miss Mandeville, I will command my own servants to cane you within an inch of your miserable life, if you dare speak of her in such terms again."

With these words the indignant young lord flung Master Simon Turner from him with so violent an impetus, that that worthy personage, staggering over the threshold of the pavilion, lost his footing, and rolled in a most agreeable style, without receiving the least injury, down the gentle turf-clad acclivity on which the building stood. The lawyer, however, speedily scrambled to his feet again, and resumed his former station at the door of the summerhouse, not a little enraged to perceive, as he rushed past them, that his own attendants were slyly grinning at his defeat. "This is a breach of the peace," gasped the lawyer—"a downright, absolute breach of the peace, a daring assault upon the person of a true and loyal subject of King George. But it is all very well," he continued, with a reassumption of the sneering tone which he thought so peculiarly cutting and ironical—"it is all very well, lords and gentlemen, all of you have a care, have a care—these are not the days in which the meanest among loyal subjects are disregarded by the first among the country's rulers. There, Mr. Harry Draycot, there," exclaimed Turner, with great vehemence, and pulling a paper out of his pocket as he spoke, which he thrust into the young man's

hand—"there, Sir, is a summons for you to account for the assault which, on the sixteenth day of March last, you committed on the person of my most honourable patron, Sir Andrew Luntley. You will perceive, Mr. Draycot, that you must appear, the day after to-morrow, in our good town of Lichfield, first to make answer to this charge. I hope, I do hope that no more weighty matters will interfere to prevent our being favoured on that day with a sight of brave, gallant Mr. Harry Draycot."

These last words of the lawyer were pronounced with the accompaniment of so malicious a grin, that the sagacity of Alice Morland, who had from the beginning intently watched him, was alarmed; and, approaching Mr. Curzon, she whispered, "Let Mr. Draycot beware, Sir; that bad man has some other design, which, as yet, it does not suit him to avow."

"So, indeed, I myself apprehend, Madam," answered the clergyman, approaching the spot where Harry, in utter astonishment, which deprived him at the moment of the power of speech, was perusing the paper, which charged him with having assaulted Sir Andrew Luntley on the king's highway, in the presence of the Reverend Dr. Croxall, Rector of Draycot, and divers other persons. "Mr. Turner," said Curzon, anxious to prevent any further collision between the artful and insolent lawyer and the irritable young man, whom it was evident he had an express desire to provoke—"Mr. Turner," then said Curzon, "having now, I presume, discharged your duty, you can have no objection to withdraw from Mr. Draycot's grounds, where I am sure your presence can be anything but acceptable."

"Oh, no, Sir, no, Sir, certainly not," replied Turner, smirking, and retreating backwards step by step; "I have no objection whatever to withdraw, Sir, none whatever; I can assure you it was much against my inclination that I was accompanied by these persons, to deliver the summons into Mr. Draycot's hands; but you see, Sir, with all due submission to you, that gentleman bears a character which imputes to him some little violence of temper, Sir, else I should have found great pleasure in consulting his feelings and those of his family, and would have come

alone to serve this notice—I would not even have sent my clerk ; but these violent tempers, they leave us no alternative ; servants of the law should be treated with a certain respect, and eh, eh, really, Sir, one cannot expose one's self to the chance of having one's skull cracked, out of deference to the feelings of a gentleman. But good morning, Sir, good morning ; I shall be sorry if I have alarmed the ladies ; and oh, oh, I do hope, Sir, my next meeting with Mr. Harry Draycot may be more agreeable to his feelings."

So saying, Mr. Turner made a most affectedly profound bow, and withdrew, followed by his respectable attendants. The party in the pavilion, which had been so rudely broken in upon, then left it for the Manor House ; Harry Draycot laughed off the charge laid against him by Sir Andrew, feeling sufficiently confident that he could rebut it, when brought to a trial, the Baronet having thrust himself in his way on the morning of the chase, in a manner likely to have irritated a much more placable person. With this assurance, then, Harry Draycot, in their walk to the Manor House, repressed the tremors of Lady Anne, who had been fairly scared by the insolence of the lawyer, while Lord Fitzwarine was at no less pains to soothe the feelings of Sybil, which had been more deeply galled by the appellation which the contemptible Turner had applied to her than she cared to avow ; thus, in reply to the assertion of Lord Fitzwarine that she would yet find all go well in her contest with Sir Andrew, Sybil replied, "Alas, my Lord, I do hope it may do so ; for from the insolence of this man it is evident that the story of my mother's wrongs will be a word in the mouths of the most contemptible, and I shall lament the hour in which I sought even to reinstate her fame, if it ends but in confirming the machinations of those whose wickedness hurried her to an early grave."

"Have a better hope, dear Miss Mandeville," replied Lord Fitzwarine, "and pardon me when I use the privilege of a friend, and say that you sink somewhat below the usual firmness and vigour of your mind, when you suffer yourself to be, even for a moment, ruffled by the insolence of the base and mise-

rable wretch, who is, after all, but the agent of Sir Andrew's villainy. From him, dear Miss Mandeville, you could indeed, if evil fortune threw you in his way, expect only the insult which you have unfortunately experienced. But, at the worst, if the power of Luntley should prove that which I will not yet believe it, potent enough to smother such evidence as we may be able to collect against your enemy, still, dearest Miss Mandeville, you will be the same among your friends, the worthy daughter of a noble house, one whose blood speaks in her actions, in her disdain of all that is dishonourable and mean; yes, you will still be the same Sybil Mandeville, most lovely, and worthy to be loved."

An unusual enthusiasm distinguished the manner of Lord Fitzwarine as he spoke thus; and it was doubtless by accident that he diverged from the broad path which the rest of the party were pursuing, and which led to the principal entrance from the gardens to the Manor House.

Sybil did not immediately answer the last observations of Lord Fitzwarine; an extreme confusion seemed to overwhelm her; and her companion, to avoid the awkwardness of silence, was perforce driven to speak again: his speech was very low, and could have reached no other ear than that of Sybil, but what was its tenor we may partly judge by her reply.

A deep blush dyed the face of the maiden, as she listened to those low, deeply-breathed words, and it were vain to deny that the assurance which they contained was very dear to her heart: the first reply, however, which that heart suggested, the better and firmer resolutions of her soul checked ere it was uttered upon Sybil's lip. It was very bitter to return that answer, and Sybil cast down her eyes, to conceal the scalding tears which sprang into them, ere she could find courage to make it. The thought, however, of what was due to others no less than to herself, to the kind and noble-minded Lord Aumerle, and even to the generous Fitzwarine himself, whose chivalrous and frank spirit was ever ready to outstrip the cold dictates of a worldly

prudence; all these considerations contributed to restore Sybil to herself, to enable her to overcome a momentary weakness, to be true to her own dignity, and the lessons of Alice Morland. "No, my Lord," she replied, in a tone which by a strong effort was as steady and composed as it was soothing and gentle—"no, my Lord, not while my present adverse fortune continues: I have more care for you than to accept your generous offer; your hand must not be awarded to one without a fortune and a name."

"Ah, Miss Mandeville, sweetest Sybil," replied Fitzwarine, "I have deceived myself; I rank not so high in your esteem as I would fain have hoped; you love me not, Sybil—you can never love me, or you would not urge upon me a lesson of prudence as false as it is cold. What have we, Sybil, after all, to do with the world's opinion—does our happiness depend on that?"

"Indeed, my Lord," answered Sybil, "I fear that, while we live in it, our peace or happiness must in a measure depend upon the world's established usages, but yet"—and here the heroism of Sybil fairly gave way, and she burst into an agony of tears—"dear, dear Lord Fitzwarine, be more just, I beseech you, to me and to yourself; think me not insensible to the devotion of such a heart, such a mind as yours: it befits not you, my Lord, to present to the world a wife without a station and a name, or at least one which can be for a moment disputed by a creature so vile as Sir Andrew Luntley. Dear friend, I have lived as yet for one purpose—to restore my mother's fame, and, I will own, to take such a revenge as may befit a Christian on the author of hers and of my father's wrongs: I must not listen to tales of love, like a damsel in an old romance; sterner matters, belonging to a hard modern world, which has nothing to do with the days of chivalry, and, alas! but little with love, task all my little energy now; but, should Sybil Mandeville ever stand confessed as such to the world, should that happy time ever come—"

Here Sybil paused and hesitated; and the young man, eagerly breaking in, implored that she would promise that in that event at least she would award a different reply to his suit.

"Indeed, my Lord," answered Sybil, with a mournful smile, "I can in honour give you no such promise ; that were indeed to put a fetter upon you, in imposing which I should prove myself equally mean and selfish ; but impute all blame to my pride, Lord Fitzwarine ; say that I am alike sensitive and haughty ; that to be the acknowledged possessor of an ancient and honourable name is the first wish, call it if you will the ruling passion of my soul ; and that, sweet even as is the preference with which you honour me, I yield not to it, I will listen not to its pleadings, while my own heart tells me that, if I do so, I should shame to look your noble father in the face."

"Such, however," exclaimed another voice, "will never be the case with Miss Mandeville ; she will never be otherwise than true to herself, and the cause of all that is honourable and good."

In uttering these words, the speaker advanced from the corner of an avenue which crossed that alley in which Sybil and Lord Fitzwarine had been walking ; and some confusion might perchance have been noticed in the manner of the young man, no less than in that of the damsel, as the Earl of Aumerle stood before them. "You will believe, Eustace," said the Earl, turning towards his son, with that air of grave courteousness, which usually distinguished his manner, "that I have been no willing eaves-dropper ; but, as I was walking on the other side of the fence, much of your conversation with Miss Mandeville met my ear ; with your leave, I will now myself claim her attention for a few moments."

Lord Fitzwarine, who well surmised from his father's manner that he was not absolutely ill-disposed to receive Sybil as a daughter, immediately bowed to her, and withdrew, while the Earl, taking her hand with the ceremonious politeness peculiar to the age, led her towards the house. "Miss Mandeville," he said, "I will not intrude upon your attention long ; I have indeed little to say, beyond tendering the humble meed of my applause to your generous and noble sentiments. It is, indeed, unnecessary to deny that your supposition is correct, that I

should desire that the bride of my son should possess an honourable and undisputed name ; and you will excuse my adding, that a mere gross accession of wealth is not what I should especially seek in a matrimonial connexion for Lord Fitzwarine. No, Miss Mandeville," pursued the Earl, with a warmth of manner not usual to him, " I can most truly aver, that let your title to that name be established beyond all power of dispute, and though you had not an acre of the Rodenhurst property, I should most willingly, gladly receive as a daughter one whose accomplishments and virtues would shed a lustre on any rank ; and therefore, as I cannot believe that wickedness so atrocious as that of Sir Andrew Luntley will be finally permitted to triumph, I will confidently believe, Miss Mandeville, that I shall before long have the pleasure of renewing this conversation under circumstances more satisfactory both to you and to myself ; and, under any circumstances, you will, I trust, believe that I should be happy, in as far as my power permitted, to make you amends for the unkind fortune by which you have been hitherto pursued."

Sybil's eyes had been cast down, and her colour varied from red to pale during this long address ; it might be that, however dauntlessly she had spoken to her lover, she had yet entertained a lingering hope, that, satisfied as Lord Aumerle must really be that her mother was in truth a wife, he would not concede so much to the world's opinion as to make her union with his son depend so wholly upon her enemy's defeat. But the Earl was human, and his foible was family pride—one, indeed, of which Sybil herself so largely partook, that there was certainly a sort of injustice in the mortified, disappointed feeling which more than once shot across her heart.

The somewhat lengthened address of the Earl had brought both him and his companion to the house ; but Sybil paused ere she entered, to falter out an assurance to him, that till her position was altered she would shun the society of Lord Fitzwarine.

" Nay, dear Miss Mandeville," replied the Lord Aumerle, " I make not so unjust a requisition ; I am far too confident in the belief that we shall yet overwhelm the infamous Luntley, to

consider it necessary that Eustace should avoid your society ! Courage, my dear Miss Mandeville ; I shall have to woo you for him yet."

CHAPTER XI.

"Men that make
Envy and crooked malice nourishment
Dare bite the best."

HENRY THE EIGHTH.

IN spite of the assurance of the Earl that he required not that Sybil and Lord Fitzwarine should forswear each other's society, because there existed an obstacle to their immediate union, the girl, with perhaps a slight impulse of female pique, of the existence of which she was scarcely herself aware, avoided the young nobleman when the guests of Mr. Draycot assembled at dinner, which conduct was especially annoying to Lord Fitzwarine. Thus it was that, Sybil not having had speech with Lord Fitzwarine since the morning, he arrested her steps, as she descended the great staircase towards the ball room ; for the paper delivered by Mr. Turner to Harry Draycot in the morning had been considered by far too insignificant an effect of Sir Andrew Luntley's malice, to interrupt in any way the proposed festivities of the evening.

Never, perhaps, had Sybil appeared more beautiful than on that evening : it had been previously arranged that all the ladies assembled at this ball should wear the wreaths of white roses mingled with thyme and rue in their hair, and dresses of Brussels point lace, and white satin, with ornaments of pearls, all emblematic, such was the fancy of the hour, of the fallen fortunes of Prince Charles.

This simply elegant dress was especially adapted to the youthful and delicate beauty of Sybil ; the fragrant white roses, with their sad accompaniment of dark rue, looking even more spot-

lessly white from their contrast with her dark and glossy hair, and the graceful folds of lace and satin floating like a cloud about her slight but faultless figure.

But few of the guests had yet assembled ; and Lord Fitzwarine, blessing the chance which had thus unexpectedly thrown her in his way, hastily clasped the hand of Sybil, and was leading her, almost in spite of herself, towards a small chamber near the foot of the staircase, when a strange, fantastically-attired figure darted forwards ; and silly Jemmy, throwing himself directly in the way of Sybil and Fitzwarine, held up his hands, and, gazing upon her with a sort of bewildered admiration, exclaimed, " Ah, pretty lady ! oh, what a fair lady ! oh, oh, let poor Jemmy look at you for a while, beautiful lady ! you are like the pleasant spirits which sometimes talk to him of nights, not like those which his father sends ; no, no, his spirits are not like you, lady ; oh, oh, let old Luntley be very glad ; he loves you not, lady, and he is sure game for my father ; so, so, when Andrew Luntley dies, he will be troubled no more with you, lady ; oh, oh, pretty faces are not in the devil's regions, though many they may lead there."

As the idiot spoke, he had placed himself directly before the door of the room which Lord Fitzwarine was about to enter. Since he had learned more fully the infirmity of this poor creature, the young lord had spoken to Jemmy, when they met, with a kindness which might have been expected to have obliterated from the idiot's recollection any unpleasant feeling in connexion with the accident which had befallen him on the night of Sybil's arrival at Draycot Manor. As it was, however, master Jemmy had on more than one occasion been detected in honouring Lord Fitzwarine with certain of those sly malicious looks with which he was so much in the habit of distinguishing the young Squire. But whatever portion of malice was in the character of this unhappy being, it seemed all to disappear when Sybil was in question ; and, short as had been her residence at Draycot, it was already asserted that, did she long continue an inhabitant of the village, it might be expected that Jemmy would abandon all his mischievous tricks, and become positively

useful to the goodwives, to whom he had hitherto been so great a torment. A kind of fascination, indeed, seemed to possess this poor creature where Sybil was concerned, whom he seemed to consider as a superior being, and whose word was at any time sufficient to restrain him even in his most refractory humours. It had become a constant practice with Jemmy to collect every morning a huge bunch of violets and primroses, and carry them to the Manor for Sybil, that he might, as he said, "see the pretty lady smile;" and reproof, which from others seemed to excite all the malignity of his nature, would, when it came from her, send him cowering and moaning from her presence, as humble as a stricken hound. On this occasion of the ball, Jemmy had prevailed upon Bateman, with a promise that he would be peaceable, to allow him to stand in the hall while the company assembled, nor did he consider that in thrusting himself on Sybil's path he committed any breach of this promise, "for," wisely argued Jemmy with himself, "the fair lady will not find fault with poor Jemmy, and wherefore then should Mr. Bateman?"

Now, as Lord Fitzwarine bade him stand aside, the idiot looked appealingly towards Sybil; and, with something almost of intelligence in his haggard features, he said, "Lady, lady, Master Harry would not hearken this morning to poor silly Jemmy: oh, oh, he will find before to-morrow that the fool could speak a true word; but you, sweet lady, gentle, fair lady, oh, you are wise; you will tell the great lord to meet poor Jemmy in the dawning, before worse betides: oh, you are a brave lord," he continued, turning towards Fitzwarine, "and you will meet poor Jemmy in the hazel copse before the dawn."

"Well, well, I will meet you, Jemmy, I will meet you," said Fitzwarine, much vexed by the interruption, which had destroyed for him the opportunity which he sought of obtaining private speech with Sybil; for at that moment the doors of the ball room, a large apartment to the right of the great hall, were thrown open, and the two Squires of Draycot appeared upon the staircase, with Miss Mildred and the Lady Anne. The per-

tinacious Jemmy, however, was not content with Lord Fitzwarine's testy assurance : turning again to Sybil, he exclaimed, with an air of cunning, " You tell him, lady ; do you bid him meet poor Jemmy ; the great lord minds your word, fair lady."

" Nay, Jemmy," said Sybil, laughing, " you overate my influence ; but be you content ; what Lord Fitzwarine promises I am sure he will perform."

" Ay, that is well," exclaimed the idiot, with an extravagant shout of exultation " now he will come, I know ; the fair lady passes her word, and the great lord cannot choose she should find him worse than his. Farewell, young lord, brave lord ; I shall see you in the dawning, and many a strange thing may happen even in so short a time ; oh, oh, the free man may be captured, and a shroud woven for the young and strong, in a shorter time than that ; but, my father, my father, he overlooks it all ; oh, he has work, work always to be done in this pleasant world."

Thus, by turns, screaming and muttering to himself, Jemmy left the hall, apparently indifferent as to the rest of the company, now that he had seen his favourite, Sybil.

It was with a countenance of sincere regret that, as they entered the ball room, Miss Draycot informed Sybil that the report of the morning was but too correct ; and that poor Farmer Ashley had, indeed, upon the strength of information laid against him by Sir Andrew Luntley and Simon Turner, been conveyed to the prison at Lichfield.

This news had thrown a cloud over the brow of Lady Anne, who could not be persuaded but that some very serious danger threatened young Draycot at the hands of the Baronet ; it might be that the evident anxiety of the young lady on his account made ample amends to Harry for such slight apprehension as it was possible for his bold, reckless spirit to entertain ; but certain it is that he never was in better spirits, laughing off even the half-expressed doubt of Lord Fitzwarine and the Earl, and opening the ball with an animation that seemed almost infectious, since it banished the sadness of Lady Anne.

Sybil, too, in the gaiety of the surrounding scene, partially forgot the fears and anxieties which had oppressed her in the morning, and, happy for the time in the society of Lord Fitzwarine, was inclined to apprehend less from Sir Andrew Luntley.

Luxury and elegance, no less than festivity, were in that scene : the ball room at Draycot House was of noble dimensions, panelled with white and gold, with a painted ceiling, from which descended three superb chandeliers. At the upper end of this room was a spacious conservatory, filled with the choicest exotics ; for Miss Draycot was an enthusiast in the cultivation of flowers, and her brother, ever anxious to gratify a sister to whose affection both himself and his son owed so much, spared neither trouble nor expense in procuring for her rare specimens both of flowers and plants.

At the extreme end of this conservatory were a pair of large folding doors communicating with the gardens, and similar to those which opened into the ball room, while to the right and left were doors leading into spacious apartments, in one of which the supper was prepared. The evening being, like the day which had preceded it, unusually warm for the season of the year, the doors of the conservatory which communicated with the gardens were thrown open ; and many of the guests, during the pauses of the dance, sought within it the benefit of a freer air. Thus it was that, towards midnight, and at the very moment when old Bateman announced that supper was served, a rushing noise, and the sound of loud and insolent voices in the conservatory, arrested the attention of the dancers : this was succeeded by a scream from more than one lady who had been walking there ; and the Squire and his son, immediately advancing to ascertain the meaning of this alarm, beheld three men approaching, who, upon the inquiry of the elder Mr. Draycot as to the cause of their intrusion, answered, in no very courteous terms, that they were messengers of state, charged with the power of arresting his son, for having, in conjunction with certain other Oxford students, drank to the

health of the Pretender, and made use of various treasonable expressions, if indeed it could not be proved that he had been actually engaged in a correspondence with certain Continental friends of the Chevalier, for a renewal of the rebellious attempt of the latter upon the English crown. Upon this announcement a cry of horror from the females rang through the apartment, and Miss Draycot swooned; for the bloody revenges of Forty-Five were yet fresh in the recollection of all present; and too well was it known that, if the fate of the rash but gallant-minded Harry Draycot depended only on the mercy of the Government, it would be indeed severe—imprisonment, banishment, the halter, suggesting themselves with a frightful rapidity to the imagination of each appalled individual in that crowded room. As to Lady Anne, she stood like one stupefied; and Sybil, turning towards her, after she had assisted to place Miss Draycot on one of the couches which lined the walls of the apartment, was alarmed no less by the vacancy than by the frightful pallor of her face; on touching her hand, she found it cold as marble: and she would then have led her to the side of Miss Draycot, but her touch seemed to recall the consciousness of Lady Anne, and, putting Sybil back, she stepped with clasped hands nearer to the group of gentlemen, who were crowding round the officers charged with the arrest of Harry Draycot. All this was the work of but a few minutes; and for those minutes, while the voices of all his guests were loud and angry, a kind of spell seemed to check the utterance of the elder Draycot; then, as he looked at his almost idolized son, already in the grasp of the insolent myrmidons of the law, who insisted that they would within an hour convey him from Draycot, the energy of the old man returned; and, putting his hand to his sword in a paroxysm of rash but most excusable indignation, he advanced towards the officers, exclaiming, fiercely, “They lie, who say that my son is in correspondence with the friends of the Chevalier; I do not believe even he was with the party who so rashly drank his health, for I have myself heard him censure their folly.”

"So much the better for you and your son, old gentleman, if you can prove as much," replied one of the messengers; "but we have nothing to do with that—nothing but to start fairly with him to London—and that, as I just said, we must do within an hour."

"And in that, you audacious ruffian," said the irritated Mr. Draycot, "he shall not yield to your insolence. What! is he not to have time to make even a preparation for his journey? Is a gentleman of blood and land to be hauled about like a common felon at the will of such a villain as thou art?"

"I do not know, old gentleman," replied the fellow, with a sullen air, "anything about my being a villain, nor I do not care. We officers of the law gets used to hearing ourselves called hard names now; and they breaks no bones; so it does not much matter. But it does matter that we should mind our orders; and him who has given this information against your son, Squire, laid it down as both you and he were mortal dangerous people; so it is in our orders as we are to show no grace to Mr. Harry."

"Comes the blow from thence?" said old Draycot, turning something paler than he had yet done. "Oh," he continued, in a lower tone, "the plot has its author on the surface, Andrew Luntley. Villain! villain! justice has a long arrear to settle with thee; but the time will come when thou must answer to the black account."

Suppressed as was the tone in which these words were uttered, they met the ear of Sybil; and, bursting into the circle in which Mr. Drayton stood, she seized his hand, and exclaimed, in a voice of piercing anguish, "Ah, for me, for me, my generous friend, you suffer this for me! Oh, would that I had buried together my own and my mother's wrongs!—would that I had died ere I had brought this evil upon you, my generous, noble friend!"

"Nay, nay, Sybil, do not fret thyself, dear child," said the Squire; "the villain had an outstanding debt of hatred towards me and mine long ere you came to Draycot; but fear not, fear

not, Sybil," pursued he, with a ghastly attempt at a smile; "fear not—justice is not dead—though one might think at the moment she was—but she lives, Sybil, she lives; yes, Sir Andrew Luntley will meet with justice yet!"

"Ay, ay, he will! he will!—Sir Andrew Luntley will have justice yet!" cried a wild, screaming voice; and silly Jemmy, who like the officers had entered the house from the open doors of the conservatory, burst into the circle, with such an excitement, such a disorder in his looks, that every one shrank from him with the conviction that they were in the presence of an actual maniac. "Ah! ah!" shrieked silly Jemmy, tossing his arms above his head, "Justice! justice!—yes, that is the word—the word Sir Andrew mutters in his sleep; and then talks of gibbets, and dead men, and winding sheets with stains of blood upon them! Ah, ah, brave Sir Andrew! gay dreams! pleasant dreams! Oh, oh, 'tis fine to be a rich man, and look so ghastly in his sleep; one would think my father whispered in his ear. Ah, brave Sir Andrew! happy Sir Andrew! and happy Master Harry, too! Oh, oh! who will scoff at Jemmy's secret another time?"

As the idiot thus spoke, old Bateman, who had stood by hitherto, wrapt in a kind of consternation at the misfortune which had overtaken his beloved young master, advanced to remove him; but silly Jemmy, shaking off the grasp of the old man as though it had been that of an infant, exclaimed in a sneering tone, "Nay, nay, good Mr. Bateman, I want not your guidance; I will bid the noble company good bye without your help. Fair betide them! my father will have a deal of work to do among them, it would seem; but he has a keen eye, ah! ah! he knows where the game hides; he looks to Sir Andrew Luntley, and blows the fires hard and fast for him. But, good bye, good bye, Master Harry! you will hear to my secrets another time; and the great lord, he is safe to meet me in the hazel copse."

As he ceased speaking, silly Jemmy advanced towards the principal officer, and, executing an extravagant caper, turned upon him with so demoniac a grin, that the man involuntarily

recoiled a step or two, as if under the apprehension of some mortal harm. "Ah, ah!" cried Jemmy, in a chuckling tone; "and you are sent by Sir Andrew, you are! Well, well, you are a fine man! a very proper man! You know well my father, the devil; I will speak to him that he may keep a nice little nook among his fires for you, too."

Having pronounced this comfortable assurance, with which the man did not seem to be absolutely delighted, Jemmy executed another caper, and then, bounding towards the conservatory, fled in apparently high exultation, screaming and shouting, through the park.

The dispute between the officers and the elder Squire, as to the immediate removal of Harry, was renewed on the departure of Jemmy; and it was with considerable difficulty, and the promise of a large gratuity, that they were at last prevailed upon to yield to their prisoner two hours before commencing their journey.

The first confusion attendant on this untoward event being passed, Miss Draycot was conveyed to her chamber, accompanied by Alice Morland, Sybil Mandeville, and Lady Anne; while Mr. Draycot, with the Earl of Aumerle, Lord Fitzwarine, Mr. Curzon, and Lawson, with a few other of the principal male guests at the Manor House, retreated into the great dining room, to consider what measures had best be pursued in this exigency. The major portion of the company withdrew from Draycot within an hour after Harry's arrest. After some anxious consultation, it was finally determined that Mr. Draycot should accompany his son to London, whither Lord Aumerle would also immediately proceed, to seek an interview with the Prince of Wales, upon whose amiable and upright character, no less than on the personal friendship with which that Prince honoured himself, Lord Aumerle relied as a means of defeating the malice of Luntley. True it is that the Earl was painfully aware that there would be a difficulty in reaching that bad man, even through the station and virtues of the heir apparent himself, he being in such an open hostility to a ministry almost every

member of which Luntley could count among his personal friends, or to speak more accurately, the friends of his subtle intrigues.

It was, however, a foundation, upon which Lord Aumerle built some hopes to support the spirits of his unhappy friends, that he knew that the character of Sir Andrew was already made known in no very creditable manner to the Prince; that his arbitrary and cruel conduct towards his tenants in the country, whether at Rodenhurst or at Draycot, and his infamous gambling in the stocks, carried on as it was with a dishonesty and an art which had driven numberless families to ruin, were all known, and were already in the mouths of an opposition, which, strengthened as it was by the countenance of the Prince of Wales, would not be backward to fling either disgrace or ruin upon so notorious a partisan of the ministers as Sir Andrew Luntley.

Thus then it was finally determined that the Earl should leave Draycot at the same time with the Squire and his son, and accompanied by Mr. Curzon; while Lord Fitzwarine was to remain a few hours longer at the Manor House, together with Mr. Lawson, in order to escort the ladies to London; Miss Draycot having by this time recovered from her swoon, and insisting that she would herself proceed to the Capital, that she might be near her brother and his son in their distress. The first shock of her nephew's arrest being over, Mildred showed an energy which would not have disgraced the firm nerves of Alice Morland herself; who, on her part, applauded in Miss Draycot the line of conduct which she felt that under the same circumstances she would unhesitatingly have pursued herself, assisting Mildred to waive those objections which an anxiety to spare her feelings led the Squire to advance to the proposal which his sister made. Once roused, Mildred was all herself, assisting Sybil and Alice in the necessary preparations for the sudden journey of her nephew and brother with a steady calmness. As for poor Lady Anne, her gentle, timid nature was overwhelmed at once by the evil which threatened Harry Draycot, and which seemed to her

the more appalling that it was undefined. For Harry himself, he bore his arrest with a spirit which disdained to believe that it could have any other result than the total defeat of Luntley : it may be that this bold confidence of Harry was not decreased by five minutes' conversation which he snatched with Lady Anne, in the recess of one of the deep windows of the breakfast parlour, while the officers waited for him at the door, just before his departure : what were the exact words of this conversation we cannot tell, but its purport must surely have been somewhat agreeable, for Master Harry left the recess with a flushed cheek, a sparkling eye, and a careless, dashing air, anything but becoming the desperate and melancholy condition of a state-prisoner.

In spite of the expedition which had been used, and the insolent grumbling of the officers, the clock of the old village church struck four, just as the carriage which conveyed them, with their prisoner, passed through the park gates, preceded by the travelling equipage of the Earl, containing that nobleman, Mr. Curzon and the elder Draycot ; for the officers had in the most peremptory manner refused to permit the father to accompany his son, alleging that they had express orders not to allow any communication between their prisoner and his friends. The grey streaks of dawn were now spreading along the eastern horizon ; and Sybil, who had stepped into one of the low stone balconies upon which the windows of the breakfast parlour opened, was turning away, with a mournful air, after watching the carriages as they rolled through the park, in the dim shadowy light of the coming morning. At that moment, however, she perceived a figure advancing through the gloom ; a low, deep voice pronounced her name, and Lord Fitzwarine stood beneath the balcony. "Sybil, sweetest," said the young man, with a melancholy attempt to speak triflingly, "see you not we have now the dawning, in which we both promised I should meet our prophet Jemmy in the hazel copse?"

"Nay, my Lord," exclaimed Sybil, hastily returning, with a sudden shiver of apprehension for which she could not altogether account ; "you will not meet that wild, fearful creature in so

lone a spot: alas! the occurrences of this night will have made me as superstitious as the villagers themselves, with regard to silly Jemmy: meet him not, Lord Fitzwarine, I pray you." As Sybil spoke she had advanced to the edge of the balcony, and leaned over its curiously carved stone balustrade: its distance from the ground was so trifling, that Lord Fitzwarine could clasp her hand, which she had stretched out in her earnest entreaty.

"Nay, dearest," he said, tenderly pressing that trembling hand in his own, "dissuade me not from keeping this tryst. Ah! if you have really an apprehension in connexion with this poor miserable idiot, it should rather urge me to keep faith with him. I think, indeed, that he had gathered from Turner, or by some other means, a foreknowledge of the calamity which has this night befallen our friend, and I am not without an expectation that he has something to communicate to me, which it is of real importance we should know. Besides, my Sybil, did you not notice what a fearful imputation his wild, wandering words might fix upon the villain Luntley?"

"I did, indeed," replied Sybil, in a hollow tone, and with a shudder which was perceptible even to Lord Fitzwarine; "but, oh, dear friend," she continued, "those words of the wretched idiot did but give a shape, a substance to the horrible doubt, which has haunted me from the hour that I knew La Roche; his moodiness, his despair, originated in no common crime, not even in the suppression of the proofs of my mother's marriage; from all I observed in La Roche, from all which I have learned of Alice Morland, I do believe that the stain of blood, my father's blood, is on Sir Andrew's soul."

"And yet, Sybil," said Fitzwarine, "you would dissuade me from meeting this poor being, who alone seems to apprehend his guilt! Sybil, Heaven oftentimes works out its wise purposes by means of those who appear to us strange instruments. I must meet the idiot."

"Nay, then," answered Sybil, "I will own all my weakness; I have an awful apprehension of danger to you in this meeting; how know you what evil men may make this miserable idiot their tool?"

"So, so, great lord, noble lord," cried the wild, screaming voice of Jemmy, at the extremity of the lawn that spread before the balcony in which Sybil stood, "you keep not your faith; see, see, the grey dawning is nearly past, and the sunbeams will be here anon! Come, come, noble lord, great lord, flout not at Jemmy's secrets: know you not they have a worth by this time?"

As, speaking in this manner, the idiot crossed the lawn, Lord Fitzwarine yet more tenderly pressed the hand of Sybil, and then relinquished it, exclaiming, "You see, love, I must fain keep my appointment: nay, Sybil, look not so alarmed, I shall see you again ere the sun is fairly up."

With these words Lord Fitzwarine withdrew from the balcony, turning but once to wave his hand in a last adieu to Sybil, as he followed silly Jemmy, who had stood beckoning him on the lawn. Sybil lingered in the balcony long after her lover and his companion had disappeared in the distance; then she looked anxiously up at the morning sky, still spreading grey and cold above her head, with only a few faint saffron streaks brightening the eastern clouds. Lord Fitzwarine had promised to return when the sun had fairly risen, and Sybil endeavoured to teach patience and courage to her heart till then; but hour after hour passed away, till the broad noontide beams flung their radiance over the more open parts of the park; and still Lord Fitzwarine came not.

But it was not till old Bateman and her friend, Lawson, had returned after an unsuccessful search for the young nobleman, that, ceasing all attempts to support the already sinking spirits of Lady Anne, Sybil Mandeville threw herself into the arms of her maternal friend, and gave free vent to all the agony of her own apprehensions. The idiot, Jemmy, was not that day seen in the village.

CHAPTER XII.

“If it be aught toward the general good,
Set honour in one eye, and death i’ the other,
And I will look on both indifferently;
For, let the gods so speed me, as I love
The name of honour more than I fear death.”

JULIUS CÆSAR.

IT was the morning after Lord Aumerle’s arrival in London that he proceeded to Kew, and obtained an interview with the Prince of Wales; for the Earl was not one who would suffer affairs of importance to his friends to lie idle in his hands; nor the Prince a person to deny him an immediate audience, either upon the forms of state, or that indolence of pleasure, so frequently advanced by individuals of his rank.

Thus it was that, before noon on the first day of Harry Draycot’s imprisonment in London, the Prince was fairly possessed of the long-cherished causes of that hatred on the part of Sir Andrew Luntley towards the Draycot family which had burst out in the malignant charge of treason, which he had now brought against the young Squire. With the sad history of the unhappy Emma Frankley, and the increased rage of the Baronet against the Draycots, who had so openly espoused her daughter’s cause, the Earl also made Prince Frederick acquainted.

“I would, my Lord,” said the Prince, in reply to these communications, “that my power to serve your friends was equal to my will! but you are yourself aware that my circumstances with the King have long been such, that, should they be urged upon his notice as persons in whom I take an interest, that plea would alone suffice to incline him against them. Still I am happy that, by force of my natural position, the power is mine to stand between an honest man and an absolute injustice; and be you assured that these gentlemen, who have by your account

chiefly incurred Sir Andrew's hatred because they have checked his shameless oppressions in their neighbourhood, shall not become the victims of his malice without a hand raised in their behalf. The name of this man, this Luntley, is indeed not new to my ear; he is, unfortunately, only too public a character; the vileness of fraud by which he has amassed his splendid fortune is notorious; but the man has some talent as a popular orator, and is beside a devoted adherent of our ministers, whom he is ever ready to aid, either by persuading the unfortunate people that their welfare, their liberty, are the ardently sought ends of the ministers, or by freely offering them his purse when other arts have failed, and bribery is the required engine."

"The unfortunate people, indeed!" exclaimed Lord Aumerle, "your Royal Highness has most truly named them; oh, by what infatuation is it that any portion of society, however small, can believe the Whigs to be the people's friends? What oppressive tax—what unjust law is it, that we do not owe to that most odious faction? It is well for them to name liberty to the people, and boast forsooth of their allegiance to the Crown; the liberty which they offer is such as Satan tendered Eve in Paradise—a fruit, whose taste is misery and death. Alas, at this moment even the dignity of the Crown, and the liberties of the people, alike lie at the feet of the Whigs."

"It is so, in truth, Lord Aumerle," answered Prince Frederick; "the dignity of the Crown is sacrificed by these Whig partisans, who are so loyal to my father's house. Ah, Lord Aumerle, infatuated even as he is, be assured that he feels their insolence at times: when the bitterness of his feelings urged him to exclaim that they would make of him a Doge of Genoa, think you he did not feel it then? So also was it with William of Orange, when, cold and calculating as he was, the encroachments of the Whigs upon the royal power passed even the bounds of his endurance, and he threatened to return to his native land, rather than bear their tyranny more. But that which hurts me most, Lord Aumerle," continued the Prince, in a tone which, though calmer than that which he had lately used,

was still full of bitterness and vexation—"that which I own most affects me is, the position in which mine own race will be placed in the eyes of the people by these oligarchs: yes, let the people regard the evils imposed on them by the Whigs, whether it be the Riot or the Septennial Act, or the oppressive burthen of the Excise Laws, still have these same Whigs had the cunning to mix up the name of the House of Hanover with those bad deeds, of which while they take the advantage, they leave to the family which they most affect to honour all the odium. But, to return to the affairs of your friends, I am hopeful that we shall see this villain, Luntley, brought to the ruin he so well deserves: still must we use a caution in our endeavours; the fellow, I know, is high in the good graces of my most excellent brother of Cumberland, and the case will be worse with your friends for that. I could wish indeed this youth, this Draycot, had been less rash than you describe him; for you know that in the Court of King's Bench it has gone hard with those three silly Oxford boys who drank to the health of the Chevalier, and of whom you tell me Sir Andrew charges Mr. Draycot with being an associate."

"I am indeed aware of that, your Highness," answered the Earl, "and that it is even contemplated to subject the statutes of that University to the King's Council. I know, too, that an information has been granted against Dr. Purnel, the Vice-Chancellor; our ministers will indeed lose no opportunity of insulting that illustrious University, since they know its principles to be adverse to them; but the disgrace of their proceedings reflects upon themselves. Great umbrage has been taken by the people at the severity of the punishment inflicted on these wild, hot-headed youths. In more than one quarter has it been said, that the proceedings of the Star Chamber could but furnish a parallel to the decision which has been pronounced against the giddy offenders."

"It does so, indeed," cried the Prince, with bitterness; "it is, as I but now said, the dishonour which these counsellors bring upon the King's own name which makes them so odious

to me; for the meanness of Whig malice, no less than for the mightiness of its oppressions, will the House of Hanover be held amenable in the nation's mind. It may be indeed that this faction have made the King believe that their support is all-important to his well being; but, Heaven be my judge, I could not, would not, bear with them: no, to me any reverses were preferable to such an abandonment of honour, such indifference to the nation's good, as is to my mind implied in the endurance as ministers of these men."

As he pronounced these words, the Prince paced the room with an irritated air; but, speedily reassuming the command over himself, he assured Lord Aumerle that he would keep his eye upon the fortunes of Harry Draycot, and that, as far as his interference could avail, it should be exerted in the young man's behalf. "I do think, my Lord," said the Prince, in conclusion, "that our sapient ministers like not altogether the terms upon which they at present stand with me, and it must go hard if my name even yet does not weigh as much in their estimation as that of perhaps the very vilest among all their vile partisans. Your friends have, indeed, more to apprehend from the friendship with which I understand my most honourable brother openly boasts that he favours this Luntley: for you know that such is the infatuation of the King where the Duke of Cumberland is concerned, that upon his authority he would condemn an archangel unheard."

"It may be," answered Lord Aumerle, "that your Highness does not overrate the influence of your royal brother; but I cannot believe that the Duke of Cumberland would exert such an influence in behalf of Luntley, did he know the full extent of his wickedness, of which, however, we hope before long to obtain such proofs as shall make it impossible for the ministers to continue towards him their support, and quite overwhelm the false testimony which I apprehend he is prepared to bear against young Draycot; all, then, that I seek of your Royal Highness is, that you would be graciously pleased to interpose for a delay in the execution of any sentence which may be passed on

Mr. Draycot ; delay is, indeed, all we seek ; while, on the other hand, it is certain that Sir Andrew will endeavour to hurry on, and huddle up every proceeding with all possible speed."

"That is indeed tolerably certain," answered the Prince ; "but you may rely upon me, Lord Aumerle, for ensuring some delay : I could wish, indeed, that the curate who united Miss Mandeville's parents could be found : the prospect of countenance and protection which we might venture to hold out to him, believing him, as we well may, a man more unfortunate than guilty, 'more sinned against than sinning'—this prospect might give him courage to tell the truth ; and it must be in his power to furnish so many corroborative proofs as to the purloining of the marriage certificate, that we can scarcely doubt that the guilt of Luntley would be thereby established beyond the possibility of being denied, even by the warmest of his friends."

"To the discovery of that man, your Royal Highness," answered Lord Aumerle, "we shall most anxiously address our endeavours ; and, since you have graciously promised to interfere in behalf of my young friend, should Sir Andrew seem likely to accomplish the ends of his malice ere we are quite prepared to furnish those nice proofs of his own turpitude which the law will demand, we will keep a good heart, holding ourselves safe in the consciousness that Harry is innocent of aught but it may be a little of the imprudence of youth, and that any very important charge which may be brought against him must needs have its sole existence and authority in the malice of his foe."

"True innocence is, indeed, a shield of adamant, Lord Aumerle," answered the Prince, adding, with a smile, "though, touching the innocence of these gentlemen of Draycot, I apprehend that my good father and brother may be inclined, under any circumstances, to dispute whether innocence is compatible with such wofully Jacobite prejudices as distinguish both the Squire and his son. Fortune forefend, now ! that they should charge me with being a Jacobite myself ; think, Lord Aumerle, what would be my condition with his Majesty, should our dear Cumberland persuade him to that."

The Earl smiled at this suggestion ; then he said, with something of enthusiasm in his air, " Ah, Sir, I will venture upon prophecy for once : the time shall be, ere many years have rolled away, when, by your own Royal House the right loyalty, the unflinching fidelity of those unfortunate Jacobites shall be estimated at its worth."

" Now, my good Lord," answered the Prince, with another smile, " you are not going to surprise me into a confession of downright Jacobitism, though it may be they form rare models for true and faithful subjects—such subjects, indeed, as he who looks to be a king might choose."

" And upon that principle, your Highness," replied the Earl, " I shall entertain no fear in the behalf of the fortunes of my friend Harry."

With these words Lord Aumerle took leave of the Prince, his heart being considerably lightened of its anxiety on young Draycot's account, by the promise which he had received.

The morning being a fine one, the Earl had taken horse for this visit to Kew, followed only by a single groom ; thus it was that in passing through Putney, on his return to town, his attention was drawn more particularly to an elderly gentleman, who, with the assistance of a female servant, was dragging a garden chair a little beyond the village ; the chair being occupied, apparently, by some person in very ill health. Before, however, the Earl had ridden up to this group, they stopped ; and the gentleman, leaning over the invalid, wrung his hands, and appeared in so much distress that Lord Aumerle, on reaching the spot, was induced to inquire its cause.

" Alas, Sir," replied the gentleman, turning towards him a countenance, the extreme paleness and deep lines of which seemed the effects of sorrow rather than of age, " my child, my poor sick child ! The beauty of the morning tempted us to bring her into the open air, but the exertion has been too much for her. Oh, my daughter, my dear Alithea ! She is surely, surely dead !"

" I hope not, Sir," answered the Earl, who had approached the

little vehicle more closely, and was regarding with benevolent concern the death-like features of its occupant, a girl of about sixteen years of age, who was apparently in the last stage of a consumption. It appeared, indeed, that the first harrowing suspicion of her father was incorrect, and that she had merely swooned; for, on her temples being bathed with some water which her attendant brought from a cottage at the roadside, she heaved a profound sigh, and unclosed a pair of large blue eyes, whose pensive lustre, combined with the waving curls of auburn hair which fell about her pale face, gave another charm to its wasted but still delicate features. Seeing that she was somewhat recovered, the Earl politely offered his servant's assistance in conveying the young lady home, which offer was declined by her father, who at the same time added, "My name, Sir, is Barnard, and I am well known in Putney, where I have long resided; should it please you at any time, in passing through the village, to call at my humble abode, I shall feel most truly happy to see you; for, unless I much mistake your looks, you can feel for a father whose last hopes hang upon his only child."

The concluding words of this address were spoken in a voice interrupted by tears, as the speaker, with his hand upon the rein of the Earl's horse, looked up in his face, and did indeed trace there that expression of deep sympathy to which he alluded. To the words of the unhappy father, for whom he felt in truth there was no hope, the Earl returned a courteous reply, announcing at the same time his own name and place of abode; and then, bidding him adieu, he turned his horse's head towards town.

Lord Aumerle had not, however, ridden another hundred yards, when by a turn in the road he came abruptly upon a party of horsemen, among whom the foremost were Sir Andrew Luntley and the Duke of Cumberland himself. A somewhat stiff return was made by the Duke to Lord Aumerle's salutation; but Sir Andrew, with an air of what was in truth insolent triumph, under the mask of extreme politeness, took his hat quite off as he passed the Earl, and, bowing almost to his horse's

rein, gave him the greeting of the morning. With a colder courtesy than that which he had evinced towards the Duke, Lord Aumerle replied to the Baronet, and, clapping spurs to his horse, pursued his way to London with all possible speed. Could Lord Aumerle have heard the wild shout of exultation, which, not two minutes after their parting, burst from the lips of Sir Andrew, how speedily would he have retraced his course !

Mr. Barnard, with his sick daughter, was still proceeding slowly back towards Putney, when the Duke and his attendants rode up ; and a shout of joy was uttered by Luntley, as, flinging himself from his horse, he grasped the arm of that unfortunate man, exclaiming, " I have thee, Wilson—there is no illusion now !"

CHAPTER XIII.

" Full in the passage of the vale above,
 A sable, silent, solemn forest stood ;
 Where nought but shadowy forms were seen to move,
 As Idleness fancied in her dreaming mood ;
 And up the hills on either side a wood,
 Of blackening pines, aye waving to and fro,
 Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood ;
 And where this valley winded out below,
 The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard to flow."

CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.

WITH many a hideous grimace and muttered exclamation, expressive of extreme delight, silly Jemmy conducted Lord Fitzwarine towards the hazel copse on the London road, where the latter had promised to meet him. A deep and deeper tint of gold was gradually spreading over the eastern sky, as the strangely assorted companions proceeded on their way ; and, by the time they had neared the hazel copse, the dim obscurity

which had lately wrapt the scene had completely given place to the thin blue mist which spreads over the landscape on the first breaking of a fine spring or summer morning.

It was a wild and desolate spot to which Eustace was now led by the idiot ; and, had Sybil Mandeville been a longer resident in the neighbourhood, she would have certainly shrunk in absolute horror from commending Lord Fitzwarine under any circumstances to visit it in company only with so questionable a companion as silly Jemmy ; the truth being, that, a year or two before, a late and lonely traveller had been found robbed and murdered in that very wood, the murderers escaping detection. Since that period the place had borne an ill repute among the peasants ; various strange and horrible stories being rife respecting it—some asserting that it was haunted by the spirit of the murdered man ; and others, that the sounds of a wild and unholy revelry might be oftentimes heard issuing from its recesses, at the charmed hour of midnight. Upon what authority these last reports were circulated it would, perhaps, have been difficult to discover, since most certainly none of the peasants of Draycot, or the neighbouring villages, would have been found bold enough to venture near its precincts after nightfall.

For good or ill, however, the repute of the wood had not scared away silly Jemmy, who haunted it night and day, and who had found in an old decayed oak in its inmost recesses a hiding place for the money which he obtained from Sir Andrew Luntley and others, together with the eggs, fowls, or whatever other trifles he could manage to steal.

With a strong trait of that cunning which so particularly distinguished the character of silly Jemmy, he had very carefull concealed his visits to this wood from the peasants, taking an especial caution that he should never be caught issuing from its recesses. Now, however, as in company with Lord Fitzwarine he more nearly approached it, the exultation of his manner suddenly subsided, and he turned more than once with an anxious look, to see if the young lord were still following him.

Nothing was more remote from the mind of Lord Fitzwarine

at the moment than a thought of fear, and the picturesque wildness of the scene around him alone attracted his attention.

A narrow winding path, by which they had entered the copse, gradually widening ere they had proceeded far, spread into a lovely turf-clad glade, with eminences rising on either side, covered with thickets of those hazel bushes which gave a name to the copse.

Under the shelter of the bushes, the boughs of which were as yet but lightly robed with young green leaves, grew immense quantities of the early wild flowers, the pale primrose, the crimson-tipped daisy, the trembling harebell, and a profusion of those violets which it had lately been the delight of silly Jemmy to present to Sybil Mandeville.

The name, however, of a mere hazel copse seemed unfitted to this wood, on a further penetration into its recesses; still, as he advanced upon the idiot's hurried and impatient steps, Lord Fitzwarine found the trees thickening, and the hills rising on either side—the tall elm, or the gaunt form of an aged oak, occasionally rising grim and majestic out of the blue morning mists which floated about the lower portion of their trunks, and which seemed at some little distance to veil all the coppice ground. Now too, as Lord Fitzwarine still proceeded, he heard mingling with the soft note of the cuckoo the low gurgling of water, as it crept over the pebbles which formed its bed.

Taller forest trees continued to rise around him, and the path narrowed, till glimpses only of the gradually brightening sky could be caught betwixt the bare, dark branches of the trees, which, as the hills rose more abruptly on each side, seemed twining over his head.

Then it was, in the uncertain light which poured between those knotted boughs, that, as silly Jemmy once more turned towards Lord Fitzwarine, the latter imagined he could trace in his countenance that expression of fearful malignity.

which so frequently characterized it when Harry Draycot was present.

They had now arrived at a spot where the stream, the brawling of which had before been heard by Lord Fitzwarine, crossed that narrow passage which silly Jemmy had so long pursued between the wooded hills. The trunk of an old tree was thrown athwart this brook, which, Lord Fitzwarine now perceived, had led its waters round the base of a hill to the left, and, after crossing the path as before named, was lost to view in the more level, but apparently impervious copse ground, stretching away to the right. The sides of the hills, from amid which this stream appeared to issue, were thickly fringed with brushwood, with here and there two or three stunted forest trees clustering together: a clump of old withered oaks, in particular, knotted their broad arms on the verge of the watercourse, and on the very base of the hill, where it almost spread into level ground.

"The fairy oaks, the fairy oaks! great lord!" said the idiot, now turning towards Fitzwarine: "See, see, how smooth the grass is beneath them, and how the daisies, and cowslips, and violets flourish there! See, too, how the trees have grown up in a ring; it is the ring you know the fairies love; and see you that old, old tree in the middle, withered boughs that never bear a leaf? oh, oh, he is the king, the king of the brown hill and the tangled copse, and I trust my money to his keeping—he has a hollow in his breast that hides it well. And sometimes, sometimes my father comes up to talk to me, and he takes his dwelling in the blasted oak, and I know when he is there, by the red light which falls upon the smooth green turf—oh, oh, 'tis the light of his eyes glaring through the rent in the withered oak: then, then, the fairies dance not upon the spot that night; for they love not the ways of my father, nor does he love theirs, save when they take an unchristened babe from its cradle, and put an eldritch goblin in its place; ah, then my father and the fairies do agree, and he makes music for them, sweet music, while they dance."

Lord Fitzwarine, while the idiot spoke, had been admiring the velvet-like beauty and freshness of the turf which grew beneath the old oaks, and the curious circle which the trees formed—a circle so exact, indeed, that he was tempted to believe it an effect of art rather than a chance of nature, and probably, from the extreme age of the trees, to be traced back even to the times of Druidical superstition.

Meanwhile, the sunbeams, no longer obstructed by the brown overhanging hills, or the knotted boughs which had excluded them from the narrow path along which Lord Fitzwarine had been lately led by the idiot, came dancing down the side of the hill with the brightness of early morning, piercing between the boughs of the old oaks, and resting in long lines of light on the smooth turf beneath them, where each yellow cowslip's cup and tiny blade of grass seemed hung with glittering gems, as their encumbering dewdrops caught the morning light.

The exhilarating brightness of those sunbeams, the loud and incessant twitter of the birds, and above all, the weariness of which he was beginning to be sensible, convinced Lord Fitzwarine that, occupied as his mind was with anxious thoughts, he had been led by silly Jemmy much farther than he had intended to proceed, under the direction of so very doubtful a guide. Now, therefore, he demanded of Jemmy what was the nature of the communication which he had to make, announcing at the same time in pretty plain terms his own resolution not to proceed any further.

"Surely, great lord, fine young lord," answered the idiot, fixing upon Fitzwarine another look of dubious meaning, "silly Jemmy would not take you further. Oh, oh! have we not arrived near to the brave oak, the blasted oak, the fairies' haunt? Oh, oh, silly Jemmy will tell his secret now."

Then the idiot broke into a kind of wild song, twisting round as he sang with a rapidity that would in no wise have discredited a dancing Dervish, and which fixed Lord Fitzwarine for a short space in mingled curiosity and astonishment, while Jemmy shouted the following words:—

THE WITHERED OAK.

I.

“LET who will love the fresh green tree,
The hollow, the blasted oak for me !
Which shadows the fairies at midnight’s hour,
When unholy spells and words have power.
I love to hear in their whispers deep
How they scared the babe as it sank to sleep ;
To the mother, pale, how they showed the grave
Her son had won in the ocean wave !
Then I shout and sport ‘neath the old oak tree,
That mothers and sons can so wretched be.

II.

“But most, but most does my heart rejoice
To hear in the whirlwind my father’s voice—
To listen, and hear him in this world say
How many have bent and confessed his sway ;
To hear him tell over the tortures strong
In which he contrives to hold them long ;
How the good and the bad have an equal woe ;
How the first must mourn what the last bestow ;
What griefs for the good and the fair may be,
To hear of their anguish is sport for me !”

The words of this strange and certainly not very philanthropic song were screamed out by silly Jemmy with such an inconceivable rapidity, and with such an apparent insensibility of the singer to aught beyond them, that they arrested the intention of Lord Fitzwarine of insisting that the idiot should immediately retrace his steps towards Draycot. Scarcely had Jemmy concluded his song, when he paused in his wild dance, and, bursting into a loud laugh, placed his fingers before his mouth, and gave utterance to a long, shrill whistle.

Then, for the first time, an apprehension of treachery glanced across the mind of Lord Fitzwarine ; and, yielding to the im-

pulse of the moment, he sprang forward, and, grasping the idiot by the throat, bade him return to Draycot, or refuse to do so at the peril of his life. The strong hold of Lord Fitzwarine—for he was highly excited—deprived the idiot of the power of distinct utterance; but even at that moment, which might have been full of danger to himself, the malevolence of his nature refused the bridle, and silly Jemmy grinned hideously in Lord Fitzwarine's face, muttering at the same time some half-unintelligible sentence, in which the latter could but just make out that his name and that of his friend Harry Draycot were conjoined. Neither did the idiot make any effort to free himself from a grasp which could have been anything but pleasant; perhaps, indeed, the cunning, of which he possessed so very abundant a share, made him not unwilling that the attention of the young lord should be occupied for a few seconds. However that might be, the echoes of Jemmy's shrill whistle had scarcely died upon the air, when a rushing of feet met the ears of Lord Fitzwarine; and as, startled by the sound, he suddenly relinquished his hold of silly Jemmy, he felt his arms seized, and pinned behind him, with a celerity and firmness that baffled all attempts at escape; and, turning his head, he beheld three or four dark and muscular men gathered round him. Their habit was that of the peasants; but their faces and hands were begrimed with smoke and dirt, either for the purposes of disguise, or as though they had been working in a smithy. On the inquiry of the young lord as to their intentions, one of them, who had hitherto hung rather in the background, stepped forwards. He was a tall, dark, heavy-looking man, with a brow shadowed by a seemingly habitual frown. His sullen tones and evil aspect betokened little sympathy with the better feelings of our nature, and gave ample evidence of his readiness and ability for evil deeds.

To Fitzwarine's further inquiries as to where he was to be led, the man refused to answer, with an insolence and obstinacy which Fitzwarine could not but feel augured ill for his personal safety. Sensible, however, that resistance was useless, he pa-

tiently suffered his strange captors to bind a handkerchief across his eyes; and with an equal patience bore the low, chuckling taunts of silly Jemmy, who chose that occasion as one upon which to pronounce sundry cutting sarcasms as to the folly of wise men who suffered themselves to be led by fools.

Meanwhile, the men who had made Lord Fitzwarine prisoner, having bound his eyes in such a manner as to exclude all possibility of his discovering by what path he was led, conducted him over what appeared to be a rugged and broken road, winding by the course of the torrent, as the low dashing of the water still met his ears; this, as they proceeded still farther, increased to a hollow, rumbling noise, as though the stream gathered strength and swiftness, and tore its way over many obstacles.

Soon, too, a booming sound, which was returned to his footsteps and those of his companions, and some heavy drops of moisture which fell upon his neck and hands, together with the still deeper and hoarser roaring of the torrent, convinced Lord Fitzwarine that he was being led through some deep, underground cavern, through the centre of which the stream made its way. After a time the ground ascended, and, instead of the clammy, moist air which he had breathed in the cavern, he felt the dry, wholesome breeze of the morning again fanning his cheek. Not having once during this strange journey heard the voice of silly Jemmy, Lord Fitzwarine had concluded that he was not of the party; never dreaming that that exemplary individual could by possibility contrive to keep silence for nearly twenty consecutive minutes. In this supposition, however, Fitzwarine was incorrect: for, just as his guides emerged from the cavern, the chuckling laugh of the idiot met his ears, as he cried, "Courage, courage, noble lord! wise lord! Be of good heart; the fool is safer to trust than the wise man after all. Oh, oh, Sir Andrew Luntley is a wise man, a very wise man!"

With what other assurances of his own good faith Jemmy might have chosen to encourage the young nobleman, we cannot undertake to say, as a somewhat harsh voice at that moment bade him quit Lord Fitzwarine's side. Meanwhile, the

gentle undulations of the ground, and a sweet scent of flowers upon the pure sharp air, convinced the latter that he was being led across one of those pleasant heathy hollows which often lie between hills, or form a space in the thickly set copse; again his conductors halted: then the ground gradually shelved, and he could hear, by the rustling and tearing of boughs, that they were forcing their way through encroaching briars. Once more his guides paused: the harsh, heavy withdrawal of iron bolts and bars met his ears; two or three steps were ascended, and he found that they were admitted to some dwelling. Several passages and apartments were then passed through; and then, his conductors removing the bandage from Lord Fitzwarine's eyes, he found himself in a moderately sized chamber, which, from the character of its appointments, might have been situated in a farmhouse of the better sort. A small table had been apparently prepared for breakfast, being spread with a clean cloth, some delicately white bread, water cresses, and ham. Lord Fitzwarine had scarcely, however, glanced round the room, when a young girl entered, bearing a tray, with steaming chocolate, milk, and new-laid eggs, all of which she placed upon the table, saying at the same time that, if the gentleman would please to take some breakfast, her master, who was very ill, would endeavour to see him immediately afterwards.

Upon this intimation, the conductors of Lord Fitzwarine withdrew, in company with the young damsel; the latter, however, looking somewhat curiously at the handsome prisoner, and glancing from him to the strongly barred windows of the chamber with a sort of look which would have implied that, on her own authority, she would have been by no means disposed to sentence so gallant-looking a gentleman to such rigorous captivity. Her disposition, however, if it were so kind, was but of little avail; for Lord Fitzwarine, as the door closed behind her and his conductors, heard a heavy bolt drawn across it. Involuntarily almost he hastened to the window; but, as before stated, it was heavily barred, the framework in which these bars were set being so strong, that Lord Fitzwarine per-

ceived at once that it would be impossible to remove them without severe labour and proper tools. From the window nothing was to be seen but a green hollow, almost arched over by bare overhanging hills.

Thus convinced that all attempts at escape would be vain, Lord Fitzwarine endeavoured to comfort himself with the recollection that, from what had hitherto passed, it did not seem that any personal violence was intended towards him. In this philosophical mood, he partook of the breakfast which had been prepared for him; for he was really exhausted with the excitement of the past night, and his long and fatiguing walk from the Manor House that morning.

The thought, however, of the promise which he had made to Sybil of a speedy return, and of the extreme distress which she, with his sister, Lady Anne, and his other friends at Draycot, would endure from his protracted absence, very considerably increased the disquiet natural to his strange situation. At the end of an hour, the dark, gloomy-looking man reappeared, in company with another and older person, whom Fitzwarine had not before seen. They bade him follow them to the chamber of their superior; and, anxious as he felt with regard to his present strange position, Fitzwarine started from his seat and traced their steps with a nervous eagerness which he in vain endeavoured to repress.

CHAPTER XIV

"Oh! when the last account 'twixt heaven and earth
Is to be made, then shall this hand and seal
Witness against us to damnation."

KING JOHN.

THE deep hollow in which that house was built, to which Lord Fitzwarine had been so mysteriously conducted, sufficiently excluded the sun from its apartments, even when its rays were streaming on the hills which surrounded the dwelling with all the fierceness of noonday.

Thus it was that the natural gloom of the building conjoined with the closed window curtains to produce a sort of dim, hazy twilight in the apartment which he now entered.

In that dim light he perceived a pallet without curtains, at the upper end of the room, on which lay extended a man, in whose livid countenance Lord Fitzwarine thought, as he approached him, that he could discover the signs of fast approaching death. Near to this couch sat the young girl who had brought the chocolate to Fitzwarine's chamber on his first arrival, and who was a pretty damsel, apparently not more than sixteen years of age: at a sign from the sick man, she rose, and quitted the apartment. He who appeared the elder of Fitzwarine's conductors then drew nigh the bed, and, regarding the ghastly features of the occupant with an anxious eye, he said, "Well, brother, the gentleman whom you so much desired to see is here—one of Squire Draycot's guests, the good Lord Fitzwarine, if silly Jemmy tells us right; pray you, now, brother, make a clean breast—are you not safe with us; and do not the sins of another lie heavy on your soul?"

At these words, the sick man partly raised his head, and, his countenance becoming more fully revealed to Lord Fitzwarine, the young man recoiled in horror from the dark traits of hatred, rage, despair, and every evil passion which were there depicted.

"Safe with you !" exclaimed the sick man, in a hollow, but bitter tone ; " safe with you—oh, yes, safe as the hare is with the hound upon her heels—safe as he upon whose neck the hangman already fits the halter : truly, Robin, thou dost make this a safe abode with thy friendships and gratitudes : what hadst thou to do with bringing that farmer hither whom Lisette tells me of ? That was just to put the villain officers on the scent, I suppose."

"Nay, friend," expostulated the other, "thou art too hard in thy dealings : that farmer saved me from the fangs of the law, when, mayhap, I deserved them ; it was but fair I should rescue him, who deserved them not."

"Ah," growled the sick man, "thou wilt lose thy snug hiding place, and be ruined at last, Robin, with thy gratitude, and kindness, and such like fooleries."

Such excuse as Robin might have been able to offer for his indulgence in those little human weaknesses to which the invalid alluded were prevented by the nearer approach of Lord Fitzwarine, who, with no very strong feeling in favour of that individual, now stepped forwards to demand what it was which he had to communicate. On being thus addressed, all the feebleness of his state seemed to vanish from the sick man's frame ; the fires of a deep and deadly hatred flashed within his hollow eyes, and, in tones thick and husky with strong emotion, he cried—"Good lord, kind lord, you know Sir Andrew Luntley ?"

"I do, indeed," replied Fitzwarine—a hope in behalf of Sybil's fortunes springing to his heart at the mention of that name.

"Yes, yes," pursued the sick man, in the same clattering, hoarse accent, "Andrew Luntley, yes, he is a villain ! Leave the room, good Robin ; Grayling, leave the room ; wait at the door while I tell this gentleman what a villain Andrew Luntley is—how the gallows groans for its rightful prey while he escapes, how names are wanting to count up his sins—thief, liar, usurer, murderer, as he is !"

This burst of rage seemed to exhaust the wretched being by whom it was exhibited ; and, as Robin and the gloomy-browed Grayling withdrew, he sank back upon his pillow, and gasped heavily for breath. After the lapse of a few minutes, however, he opened his eyes, and turned them with an expression of mingled malice and cunning upon Fitzwarine. "And you," he said, "I am told, are one of the world's good men—one who would espouse the cause of Sybil Mandeville because she is an orphan, and poor ; well, I understand not, nor ever could, how men could be swayed by motives which seem to me so fanciful as those which they name charity and kindness. Yet I do hope such motives are, and then I am sure of vengeance against thee—against thee, Andrew Luntley—false, false villain ! who couldst turn thy back upon a faithful servant, after years of toil."

As he spoke thus, the sick man shook his fist in impotent rage ; and Fitzwarine, appalled at the deadly malice of his looks and words, and remembering Sybil's account of the sick stranger at Llewenge, from an impulse of unconquerable horror, recoiled somewhat from the couch, exclaiming, "Man ! thou canst be no other than La Roche !"

At these words the invalid started, and his sallow complexion deepened to a blackness which was awful to behold : then his look of surprise changed for a sneer sardonic enough to have suited silly Jemmy, in his worst moods. "And if I were La Roche ! what then ?" he exclaimed, "what then, most brave and honourable lord ? It were hard to prove me a party to Sir Andrew's murderous deeds : if blood is on his hands, it follows not that it also staineth mine. Besides," he added, in a lower tone, and scowling fiercely on Fitzwarine, "did I think there would be danger to me, I have those about me who would stop thy mouth."

At this threat, Lord Fitzwarine started, and, putting his hand to his sword, exclaimed, "Beware, villain, how far you tempt a just indignation ; by Heaven, he dies who lays a hand on me ; and do thou beware lest thou art thyself the first victim ; a god-

less and unholy revenge it is you seek : with a sense of justice and remorse thou hast nought to do."

La Roche—for we may now call him so—burst into a horrible laugh : "Justice and remorse !" he cried ; " what are they ?" then his mind appeared to wander, and he glared fearfully about the chamber. "Yes, yes," he exclaimed, " the tales of priests and women may be true—the dead may rise to rob us of our peace—one, two, three wounds, ghastly and gaping, each a mortal one. But see, my soul, my hands are free from stain—what dost thou here ? what wouldst have with me ?"

As the guilty La Roche spoke thus, he again sunk back in the same kind of torpor which had before held him for a few minutes ; while Lord Fitzwarine, frozen with horror, stood by his side, expecting that each low, struggling breath the miserable man heaved would be his last.

But it was not so, and after a pause La Roche again looked up and spoke ; this time, however, his voice was faint and low, his sentences broken, and he hesitated between each, as though he was unable to seize and express the meanings which were floating in his mind. "In Wier Forest," he exclaimed—" at the Manor House—there are proofs ; let her go—Sybil Mandeville, none other—let her search well—the west gallery—the painted window near to that. But promise, promise—let it be Sybil Mandeville—Sybil herself, and I will give, I will give—"

Here the miserable La Roche paused, and, looking anxiously at Lord Fitzwarine, endeavoured in vain to express his further meaning : the violence of his complaint and the paroxysm of his rage had deprived him of speech. The young man, who on his part was most desirous to obtain from this wretched being all such intelligence as might be useful to Sybil, now bent over the couch, and endeavoured to supply that meaning to the broken sentences of La Roche which the latter had been unable to utter. "You wish, then," said Lord Fitzwarine, " that Miss Mandeville should visit Wier Forest—the Manor House at Rodenhurst ?"

An eager nod of assent was La Roche's reply. "But,"

pursued Fitzwarine, "how is she to obtain an entrance there? That mansion is now the property of Sir Andrew Luntley."

A smile, which the pain under which he was suffering made convulsive, distorted the features of La Roche.

"You would tell," said Lord Fitzwarine, still anxious for a more complete explanation, "how Miss Mandeville may obtain an entrance to the Manor House?"

Again La Roche made an ineffectual attempt at speech; all he could produce was some unintelligible, gibbering sentences, from which Fitzwarine, with difficulty, made out that there was one at Rodenhurst who would admit Sybil upon receiving a token from La Roche; but what was this token, or how Sybil was to proceed on gaining an entry to the Manor House, Fitzwarine could not understand.

A hollow groan burst from the bosom of La Roche, when he found it impossible to convey his design; then he made a sign for writing materials, and pointed towards the door, as if he would have his friend recalled. On a summons from Lord Fitzwarine, Robin entered, and speedily supplied La Roche with the means of conveying his intent in writing; but when the latter, by the assistance of his friend and of Fitzwarine, was raised and supported in his bed, he found himself equally unable in that mode to accomplish his wish, and, after two or three ineffectual attempts, the pen dropped from his nerveless fingers, and, with a look expressive of the utmost rage, grief, and disappointment, he sank back upon his pillow. A disappointment scarcely less than that of La Roche himself was felt by Fitzwarine; and, heedless at the moment of all danger to himself, or the anxiety which his absence from Draycot must occasion, he leaned over the bed, and assured the sick man that he should be willing to wait for a few hours the chance that he might then be better able to explain his meaning. His words, however, seemed to fall unheeded upon the ear of La Roche; and the increasing blackness about his mouth and eyes betokened an approaching convulsion, the first symptom of which was perhaps

in that loss of speech which had prevented his more fully revealing the guilt of Luntley.

A mortal apprehension now seized the heart of Fitzwarine, lest La Roche should die in the fit by which he had been seized.

At that moment, however, while Robin was using all his endeavours to restore La Roche, and Fitzwarine gazing on in an extreme anxiety, the young girl, Lisette, entered the room in great haste and considerable perturbation, and, drawing Robin aside, hastily whispered to him. Such intelligence as she had to communicate appeared not to be extremely palatable; for the colour rose high in his face, and, bidding Lisette attend to the sick man, he requested Lord Fitzwarine to follow him from the apartment. "Your Lordship," he said, "will pardon a freedom which circumstances compel me to use; but, the truth is, some unpleasant visitors have found their way to the hills above our house; and, as they may approach more closely to it than we may find agreeable, I must even beg of you to honour, by making it your abode for an hour or two, a certain retreat of ours which we devote to the pursuit of some little mysteries of art connected with our mode of life."

As Robin spoke thus, he hastily conducted Lord Fitzwarine down a staircase, and through a comfortable-looking kitchen, into what appeared a buttery, or larder; there he removed from a shelf a large tub full of salt meat, and, pressing his hand upon a portion of the wainscot above it, the shelf slid downwards; a whirr-r-r, as from the rapid turning of a wheel, ensued, and, the panels dividing, Lord Fitzwarine could discern a long dark passage, rapidly descending from the buttery, and sinking it would seem into the very bowels of the earth. It should have been observed that, in passing through the kitchen, Robin had taken a brass lamp from a shelf, the wick of which he had trimmed and lighted; he now motioned for Fitzwarine to follow him into the passage: this, however, the young nobleman hesitated to do, for its appearance was anything but inviting. "My good friend," he said, "far be it from me to suspect the honesty of your intentions; but, consider whether, in my situation you would

yourself feel disposed to enter a subterraneous passage with a total stranger."

"My Lord," answered Wyatt, with a grim smile, "it is not, I think, the part of a prudent man to refuse compliance under such circumstances as are your's at the present moment. But apprehend nothing from me, my Lord," he continued, in an altered and almost sorrowful tone; "it might be, that, if my heart had been more for such evil deeds as that of which you are inclined to suspect me, my fortunes had been better. In good faith, I fear that I shall soon adopt the sorry doctrines of La Roche, and believe that what he sneers at, as my gratitudes and kindnesses, will bring me at last, as he says, to total ruin. Look you now, my Lord, it is even by endeavouring to assist a friend, a right honest good fellow, who has done me a service in his time, that I have brought myself and my companions into this pleasant plight, which obliges me to stow away your Lordship like a needle in a truss of hay; good my Lord, I pray you do not increase my embarrassments; I assure you, on my soul's salvation, no harm will betide you in the place I seek; while you will expose me to ruin, and yourself to awful peril from my comrades, by persisting to remain in the house."

Thus urged, Lord Fitzwarine stepped into the dark passage, which appeared as though it had been excavated in the hills which sheltered, and almost concealed the house. A dry shining sand formed the floor of this passage, and the walls were roughly hewn in the solid rock which formed the foundation of the hill.

After pursuing the serpentine windings of this passage for about a hundred yards, the roar of a huge fire, and a clinking sound like that of small hammers struck upon an anvil, met Lord Fitzwarine's ears; and there was some confusion in Robin's manner, as he hurried past the open doors of a large vault, or cavern, in the recesses of which was a forge, with several dark figures flitting about in the red glow which it threw over the vault. It did not seem that Robin was desirous that his companion should make any very close observations as to this

vault ; for, hurrying, as we before said, past it, he diverged a little to the right, and then pushing open a low iron door, Fitzwarine felt a current of freer air come upon his face ; his guide then extinguished the lamp, and, beckoning the young nobleman to follow him into the vault, he pointed to what appeared a heap of deerskins in one corner, saying, at the same time, " I fear, my Lord, you will find but sorry accommodation in this place, but I have no choice, and hope at any rate to release you from it in an hour ; during that time let me pray your Lordship to keep quiet ; I cannot answer for what wild deed Grayling or my other comrades might commit, should they apprehend that you were disposed to betray them ; and I can assure your Lordship, whatever you may see or hear in this place, it will be impossible for you to leave it without their knowledge."

This last portion of Robin's address was somewhat unnecessary, since the precaution which he took of bolting the door of the vault on the outside, when he withdrew, might have alone sufficed to convince Lord Fitzwarine, that any attempt at escape would be equally dangerous and impracticable. An unpleasant feeling crept over the heart of Fitzwarine as he heard the massive bolt shot into its staple, and he very naturally commenced an accurate survey of what he could not but consider his prison.

It was a small low-roofed cell, about twelve feet square, with a narrow grating near the roof, through which streamed that current of fresh air which Lord Fitzwarine had felt upon his face when he first entered the vault ; through that grating, too, broke a long line of sickly light, which feebly illumined the cell, and in truth only made its dreariness more sensible to the occupant. With some difficulty Lord Fitzwarine managed to raise himself to a level with this grating ; but the view from it was obstructed by a hawthorn bush, the long boughs of which hung so low, that they must have concealed the grating from without ; the branches of this tree being at that time only lightly garlanded with leaves, Fitzwarine could perceive beyond it a green open space, apparently a hollow between two hills.

Turning again to examine the interior of the vault, he trod

upon a piece of metal on its earthy flooring; its shape and character startled him immediately, so that he took it into his hand, and, on a closer inspection in the light near the grating, he became convinced that it was a die used in stamping counterfeit coin. Here then was a solution of Robin's apprehensions, and a clue to the character of the visitors who, it would appear, had been announced by Lisette; the occupation of the men who had been detected by Fitzwarine so secretly working at the forge was also manifest. The enormous heap of deerskins, too, which were piled in that vault where he was imprisoned, seemed to intimate that the coiners had no objection to add deer stealing to their other dangerous pursuit.

The reflections of Fitzwarine upon his position at the moment were very painful—not that he feared any lack of faith on the part of Robin, whom he was inclined on the whole to regard as a man more unfortunate than guilty; but that individual had himself expressed doubts about his own associates, especially of the dark Grayling; and Lord Fitzwarine could not subdue an apprehension that the few valuables which he had about him might be sufficient to tempt the cupidity of men so desperate and unprincipled.

More than once, too, did the thoughts of Fitzwarine revert from the peculiar danger of his own position to the strange and half-uttered communication which he had received from La Roche, so confirmatory of all his own and Sybil's worst suspicions with reference to Sir Andrew Luntley. To have found La Roche the associate of men whom he might well believe to be coiners was a circumstance which occasioned Lord Fitzwarine no surprise, since it did but coincide with the estimate which both Sybil and Father Lawson had formed of the reckless character of the man.

It was not long, however, that Lord Fitzwarine had indulged these thoughts, when his attention was attracted by a low muttering of voices, seemingly in an adjoining cell; and, naturally turning his eyes in the direction whence those voices came, he perceived a narrow line of light crossing that which proceeded

from the grating, and which, on a closer inspection, he found to issue from a hole in the wall, large enough perhaps to admit his hand. The whispering still continuing, Lord Fitzwarine, as he stood close to the orifice, fancied that, suppressed as were the tones, he could distinguish the voice of silly Jemmy; but, had he entertained any doubt while judging only by the sound, it would at once have been determined by the sentiment.

"I tell thee, farmer," said the idiot, "thou art a very vain and silly man; or thou art worse—thou art very ungrateful; are these the thanks which are due to me for bringing mine own friends, my father's own peculiar favourites, to take thee out of the hands of those knavish officers, who think forsooth that they alone are to torment other people? Oh, how I do love to do a nice good-natured deed out of pure spite! Now, you see, I have saved you, farmer, from a lodging in Liebfeld gaol, but do not you go to think I love you for that; no, no; it was to plague the officers I was pleased to do that; and the devil is good-humoured when he is pleased, you know, and I am as good as the devil, for I am his eldest son, and that is why I am pleased. I am pleased to plague the officers, and to disappoint Master Turner and Sir Andrew, and to frighten you; for you are frightened, farmer, now—you know you are: oh, oh, if they catch you in the company of my friends, they are sure to hang you now, farmer, sure to hang you—oh, oh, what would Dame Ashley say to that, farmer? Silly Jemmy would be quits with her then for boxing his ears because he stole her eggs."

"Thou may'st grin over that very safely, Jemmy," replied the poor farmer, in a dolorous tone; "the company of these friends of thine, let alone the enmity of Sir Andrew Luntley, were indeed enough to tie a halter round the neck of any honest man."

"Halters, halters," cried Jemmy, with his customary chuckling laugh; "oh, brave Sir Andrew, good Sir Andrew, let him look to himself where halters are in question: keep you but a little while out of the way of the gibbet, but a little

while, farmer, and you shall see Sir Andrew swing on it himself."

At this moment the rattling report of firearms met the ears of Lord Fitzwarine, upon which a great shriek of exultation was uttered by Jemmy. "Oh, good Master Turner," he cried, "wise, excellent Master Turner: now would Robin and his brave fellows have taken you quietly, had you been so disposed; but, oh, oh, Master Turner, if you will have powder and shot, I reckon they are things in which Robin can deal without your teaching."

Then Lord Fitzwarine heard the voice of Farmer Ashley, apparently lamenting the proceedings which afforded silly Jemmy so much delight—"Ah, Jemmy, Jemmy, my man," he cried, "it must have been thy father the devil most surely who put thee upon telling Robin Wyatt the strait that I was in. Foolish man, foolish man, to suffer the hard-hearted Sir Andrew first to drive him upon evil courses, and then, upon my account, to put himself directly in the way of being called upon for a reckoning. Alas, alas! I would rather have been at this hour in Lichfield gaol: I am an innocent man, and they must have set me free at last; but, for poor Robin, if they catch him, he will be surely hanged."

"Thou art a fool, Farmer Ashley," answered Jemmy, unceremoniously: "thou innocent, indeed—a straw for thine innocence; what do you suppose my father cares for that—and has not he a deep hand in all matters wherein Sir Andrew is concerned—and was it not upon Sir Andrew's word they were taking thee to gaol?"

The excellent reasoning of Jemmy was here broken in upon by a sound of lamentable groans; and Lord Fitzwarine, who, after the report of the firearms, had again climbed to the grating of that dungeon in which he was himself confined, imperfectly discovered, through a narrow opening in the hawthorn boughs, two men slowly approaching across the green sward, and bearing another in their arms. Still, as they came nearer, the groans continued; and, these persons passing so close to the

hawthorn bush that its boughs brushed against them, Fitzwarine, through the interlacing of those boughs, obtained a full view of the countenance of the wounded man, which happened to be turned full towards the grating. The pallor of death sat upon the features, in which Lord Fitzwarine grieved to recognise those of Robin Wyatt, whom, from his own observation, and the remarks which had been so lately made by Farmer Ashley, he felt more inclined to pity than condemn. From the frightful change in the man's face, no less than from his deep groans, which now died away in the distance, Fitzwarine judged that he had received a dangerous, if not a mortal wound. This event seemed greatly to afflict silly Jemmy, who fell to bemoaning the misfortune of Wyatt, with a feeling of which Lord Fitzwarine could by no means have supposed him capable. "Oh! that white-faced cowardly little lawyer," he exclaimed, "if he would now but have the goodness to walk this way—I know it was he who encouraged those rascally officers to fire at poor Robin—oh, I'll tell, I'll tell my father of this: won't he stir his fires, and have them blown into a white heat!—Ah, Master Turner, worshipful Master Turner, do now please to walk this way: here is a fowling piece charged with such beautiful small shot, and I could fire at you so nicely from the screen of these bushes."

A minute or two after Jemmy had uttered this adjuration, Lord Fitzwarine, who was still stationed at the grating, perceived two more men come prowling along, looking on the ground, as if they sought some trace of blood by which to pursue the coiners to their retreat. One of these persons, as they approached more nearly, Lord Fitzwarine perceived by his attire to be an officer, and the other no less a personage than the admirable Master Turner himself, who, in an "ignorance" which did not in the end prove to be "blissful," came prying along with his nose close to the ground, directly opposite to the dungeon in which Jemmy was concealed, and which was in truth exactly similar to that which was occupied by Lord Fitzwarine.

"Come here, come here, my man!" cried Mr. Turner, in a voice of great exultation, to the officer; "I have found them, I have tracked the villains; look here—here is some of the rogue's blood whom we shot: oh, Farmer Ashley, honest Farmer Ashley, you shall be safe in Lichfield gaol to-night, though you have got friends among a band of thieves."

The delight of Master Turner, however, received a sudden check; for, as he stooped once more, to point out the blood to the officer who was approaching, he received full in his face, hands, and neck, the volley of small shot which Jemmy at that moment discharged from the fowling piece. Hereupon Master Turner uttered a roar which would not have disgraced the lungs of a mad bull, and commenced dancing upon the turf with an agility which reflected on him a wonderful credit, considering that dancing was an art which he had never studied, and that his person was rather inclining to be fat.

The laugh with which Jemmy hailed the success of his shot, though it was heard by Lord Fitzwarine, did not meet the ears of the officer, being completely overwhelmed in the cries, screams, and groans of Mr. Turner.

"What is the matter, what is the matter, Mr. Turner?" shouted the officer, as he came running up to the lawyer, out of breath, for he was at the opposite side of the dell, when the piece was fired. "What! are you hurt? where is the man who has shot you?"

"Oh, the devil, the devil!" cried the lawyer, still continuing his dance; "I did not see where the shot came from; I'll go back, I'll go away; oh, what a fool I was to expose my precious person in tracking thieves and traitors to their dens! It may be all very well for soldiers and police officers, but what have lawyers got to do with getting shots in their faces?—I'll go back!"

"Well, come away then, Mr. Turner, if you will: I must go and fetch my brother officers; I think, indeed, by this blood we shall find the villains at last: come, Mr. Turner, come away."

While the officer was speaking, Mr. Turner, having it may be supposed grown weary of his dance, had thrown himself upon

the grass, where he lay kicking his heels, and bemoaning his misfortune in a most uproarious style. "I cannot get up," he cried: "oh, Jobson, my good fellow, you must carry me—oh, is this what I have got in the service of my king and country? I am killed! I am slain—I am dead!"

"Oh," growled the officer, "you are dead, are you? then you only want an undertaker—my business is with the living."

So saying, he went in search of his companions; but, pausing to examine the blood upon the grass near the dungeon where Lord Fitzwarine was concealed, he grumbled in a tone loud enough to reach the ears of the latter, "And I am very glad as he is peppered—a sneaking, cowardly rascal—he was in such a mortal hurry to fire at poor Rob Wyatt, while he was safe in the shelter of the hill; I hate lawyers poking their noses in what does not concern them: the mischief now that such a fellow as this may do! the times as Rob has made it worth our while to say we could not find him; and now, forsooth, this little vagabond lawyer must come to help us to ferret him out, so as it is not possible to wink at his hiding hole any more."

At this moment Mr. Turner, who had been silent from sheer want of breath, recommenced howling to the officer for his assistance.

"No, no, Master Turner," shouted the latter, "you said as you was slain and dead, and I'll be judged by any other lawyer than yourself whether dead men want any assistance." Then he added in a lower, but still very surly tone, "Lie there, or go to the devil! if you cannot move for an hour to come, so much the better; poor Rob shall have a hint of what he must prepare for, any how."

With these words the officer ceased his examination of the blood prints, and, darting past the grating, was out of Lord Fitzwarine's sight in a moment. Meantime, the excellent Mr. Turner, who, lying on his back, with his face turned towards the sky, did not immediately perceive the desertion of his companion, continued his clamorous entreaties for help; and, imputing the silence with which they were received to a very stubborn

inhumanity on the part of the officer, he forthwith recovered the use of his limbs, and, starting up in a rage, ran furiously across the glade in an opposite direction to that which the man had taken, at the same time threatening that rash individual, in a voice but little below a scream, with all possible and impossible penalties of the law, for daring, as he had done, to desert one of its chief ministers when in such severe distress.

The position in which Lord Fitzwarine maintained his post at the window was a painful one, and, Mr. Turner being out of sight, he now relinquished it. He heard silly Jemmy express his intention to go and see how poor Robin bore himself under his hurt, at the same time bidding Farmer Ashley keep fast in his hiding place—an injunction which the latter was not likely to disobey, considering that it was accompanied by the assurance that Robin's men would surely cut his throat, as the unlucky cause of their chief's misfortunes, if he dared show his face among them.

As for Lord Fitzwarine, he listened anxiously for the departure of silly Jemmy, hailing it as an opportunity for obtaining speech with Farmer Ashley, whose condition—though he had evidently escaped from a gaol by the assistance of Wyatt and his companions—appeared little more enviable, as far as the last were concerned, than that of Lord Fitzwarine himself.

CHAPTER XV

“ Oh, Buckingham! beware of yonder dog;
Look, when he fawns, he bites; and, when he bites,
His venom tooth will rankle to the death;
Have not to do with him, beware of him;
Sin, death, and hell, have set their marks on him;
And all their ministers attend on him.”

RICHARD III.

IT was about nine o'clock in the evening of that day on which Lord Fitzwarine had been conducted by silly Jemmy to the retreat of Philip La Roche, when Sybil Mandeville, Father Lawson, and old Bateman were holding a conference in the library at Draycot Manor House upon the protracted and alarming absence of Lord Fitzwarine. Lady Anne had sunk completely under this new calamity, and totally absorbed the care both of Alice Morland and Miss Draycot. Sybil, on her part, certainly did not feel any less acute distress than that of Lady Anne; but her stronger mind enabled her better to suppress its exhibition, and turn to the more judicious course of considering by what means it might be possible to obtain intelligence of Fitzwarine. Thus it was that she had withdrawn with the good father, to hold with him and old Bateman that necessary discussion which the extravagant grief of Lady Anne had precluded in her presence.

About noon, intelligence had reached the Manor House that Farmer Ashley had on the previous day been rescued from the officers who were conveying him to Lichfield gaol, by a party of men, one of whom had been recognised as a person who some years before had been condemned to transportation for poaching, but who, before the execution of his sentence, had contrived to escape from prison—a circumstance which at the time had been regarded with satisfaction by many, as the man, who had originally borne an excellent character, had been driven into a course of misery and dishonesty by the barbarous oppressions of

Sir Andrew Luntley. The news, therefore, that this man was among those concerned in the rescue of Ashley, awakened all the activity and venom of Mr. Turner, and was the cause of his being, as Lord Fitzwarine had seen him, in company with the officers. Upon the first receipt of this information, Father Lawson had dispatched a messenger to the magisterial authorities at Lichfield, with a statement of the disappearance of Lord Fitzwarine, and a description of the spot to which it was supposed he had been conducted by silly Jemmy. The circuitous route, however, which the idiot had pursued, had in truth led Lord Fitzwarine far away from the vicinity of Draycot into the open country, and the officers and Mr. Turner had not reached it till long after noon.

Meanwhile, now that night had closed in, Lawson debated with Sybil whether it would not be proper on the ensuing morning to dispatch an express to the Earl of Aumerle, stating the disappearance of his son. The night, too, unlike the day which had preceded it, which had been unusually mild and warm, had set in dark and stormy, the rain pouring down in torrents, which were driven with a beating sound against the windows of the Manor House by the hollow and continual gusts of wind. Poor Sybil, now that she was no longer compelled to rally her own spirits by an attempt to support those of Lady Anne, felt that her apprehensions for Lord Fitzwarine far exceeded her hopes; and she was just about to give way to an extravagant burst of grief, when a violent ringing of the great bell of the Manor House made her start up in joyful anticipation that her lover had returned.

Like those of most other dwellers in this sad world, the hopes of Sybil were raised only to be disappointed; and bitter indeed was the disappointment which she felt, when one of Mr. Draycot's servants, throwing open the door of the library, announced the rector, Dr. Croxall. Some surprise, even amid her disappointment, was felt by Sybil, when she perceived that the large cloak in which the rector was muffled was drenched with rain, plainly intimating that he must have walked from his own residence to

the Manor House on a night when the state of the weather seemed to make the use of a carriage absolutely essential.

The worthy rector, however, seemed for once absolutely insensible to personal inconvenience, and would at first have put Bateman aside, when he offered to remove the wet cloak ; but, on the old man persisting, he hastily threw it off his shoulders, saying, in a hurried manner, " There, Bateman, take it away, take it away : and, hark you, return hither in about a quarter of an hour, I have something important to say to Mr. Lawson and Miss Mandeville, but I shall not keep them long, and then they will want to see you.

Upon this hint the old servant withdrew, whereupon the rector, who had drawn a chair near to the table, fixed his eyes upon Lawson, and then said in a marked manner—" Robert Lawson, mine old friend, you are a Benedictine monk."

At these words, the announcement contained in which amounted in those days to an accusation of the most dangerous kind, a slight flush of colour spread the cheek of Lawson ; and Sybil, with a ready apprehension, induced perhaps by the distressing events of the last twenty-four hours, stepped forwards, exclaiming, in an hysterical voice, " Oh, Sir, Sir, Dr. Croxall, who can prove that—who can declare upon oath that Mr. Lawson is one of the proscribed religious ? And if it were so—if you could know so much, Sir—I am sure you would not have the heart, you could not deliver up an old friend to the cruel laws of England. Oh, Dr. Croxall, keep this secret ; for the love of Heaven, do not oppress us more."

In the fear and eagerness of the moment Sybil had laid her hand upon the rector's arm : Croxall looked steadily at her countenance, varying as it did from red to pale, while she spoke, then he put her gently back, with an air of gravity which was unusual to him. " Young lady !" he said, " do not judge me harshly ; have more charity in your fears. Subterfuge is of no use : Mr. Lawson is a regular professed monk of the order of St. Benedict ; he took his vows at Rome, some years after, in his previous quality of a secular priest, he had united the hands of

your parents in marriage, and but two years previous to the time when he undertook, at the solicitation of Mrs. Morland, the office of guardian to yourself. These premises being made, Miss Mandeville, it is evident that the life of your friend stands forfeit to the existing law of England from the moment that he is known to have ventured on her shores."

Sybil bowed her head as the rector spoke, and, locking her hands together, pressed them hard upon her bosom, as if to suppress the groan which would partly break forth, as she listened to the truths which the Penal Laws of England made so hideous.

As for Lawson, the person more immediately interested, his manner was much more composed; he sat with his arms folded on his breast, his lips, it might be, a little more compressed than usual; but that slight colour which had visited his face when Croxall first announced his knowledge of the peculiar religious character of his old acquaintance had now faded away, and left the countenance of Lawson distinguished, as usual, by a cold ascetic paleness.

"Dr. Croxall," he said, when the rector ceased speaking, "you may well believe that, when I received in Italy that letter from Mrs. Morland which informed me how unprotected was the infancy of the only child of my friend, Gerald Mandeville, I resolved to encounter all risks for myself, so that I could but ensure her safety till the time when it should please Heaven in its wisdom to raise up in her behalf more efficient, if not more sincere friends. That time has now arrived; and, though not for spiritual pride would I thrust myself in the way of danger to be borne in the name of my faith, yet do I humbly hope the dignity of that holy faith will never be degraded by an abject corporal fear in me."

"Now, a mischief on the man!" exclaimed Croxall, starting from his chair, with some petulance in his manner, "does he, too, think I would prefer him to the high glory of suffering evils for his religion? Robert Lawson, know me better; I have come hither in all friendliness to you: it was necessary that you should

be aware how accurate an information respecting you has been obtained by one who seeks to hurt Miss Mandeville through her friends."

"Ah, Sir Andrew Luntley! Sir Andrew Luntley," said Sybil, with a cry like that of a person suffering intense bodily pain, and clasping, as she spoke, the hand of Mr. Lawson to her breast. The Benedictine had no words to comfort her, for he knew that the girl loved him as though he were in truth her father.

"Hush, hush," cried the rector. "Miss Mandeville, this is folly!" then, turning to Lawson, he said, "There is no time for idle words; you, my old friend, when I call you so, must know why I came hither. I would quarrel with you, were there time, for doubting my intent."

"Dr. Croxall, I did not doubt it," answered Lawson; "but, supposing you to be less harshly disposed towards me than the law is, I have yet to learn how your good feeling can avail me, if I am, indeed, so well known."

"Hark you, Lawson," replied the rector; "our keen Baronet has for once been too sharp for his own plans, and fairly cut them through. In his eagerness to make all sure about thee, he questioned me too closely in a letter which I received from him last night; and now will he find that two can play at the spy's game, since I have learned that a warrant for thy arrest will to-morrow morning arrive from London."

"What then, Sir, would you have my father do?" demanded Sybil, in whose eyes the rector suddenly became very amiable.

"Leave Draycot within an hour, young lady," answered Croxall, "and take you with him."

"Take me with him!" responded Sybil, in a faint tone; for the woman's heart was uppermost at that moment, and she thought only of the uncertain fate of Fitzwarine.

"Even so," replied Croxall; then, turning to the father, he went hastily on—"Mr. Lawson, it were to be wished it were a better night for travelling; but perhaps even the storm may be in your favour, if the king's messengers light on a good inn,

which they must needs do on the high road between London and Lichfield."

"Whither, then, would you have me go?" inquired Lawson.

"To London, by all means," replied the rector.

"To London!" exclaimed Sybil, with an air of more astonishment than she had yet expressed: Lawson was silent, for he had a better apprehension of Croxall's design.

"To London, assuredly," repeated the latter, "my dear young lady; no hiding place is so secure as a great city: were your friend to seek concealment in any village or country town, however far from hence, his route thither once tracked, he would be easily discovered; but in London, though it be known that he is dwelling there, it will not be so easy to find him. Now, if you avoid the main road till about daylight to-morrow, you are sure to pass the officers, and reach London in safety."

"But, wherefore, Dr. Croxall," urged Sybil, "do you think it so necessary that I should leave Draycot with Mr. Lawson? there is no law that threatens my safety."

This was a question which pressed somewhat too hard upon the rector; he had no mind to see Lawson delivered up to the tender mercies of the Penal Laws, because it so pleased Sir Andrew Luntley; nor any better disposition towards certain views, rather prejudicial to Sybil's personal safety, which he more than half believed the Baronet to entertain, and therefore it was that he so strenuously urged the propriety of her accompanying Lawson in his sudden journey. Still, to acknowledge to the girl herself and to Lawson the extent of his own doubts of Sir Andrew, was a sort of wholesale abandonment of an admirable political and religious friend, which the rector by no means relished. He perceived, however, that Sybil deferred with an absolute submission to the will of Lawson; and therefore, taking the latter aside, he hinted to him in pretty plain terms his own opinion that there existed an absolute necessity, for the personal security of Sybil, that she should leave Draycot. "For you see, my dear Sir," he said, "this unhappy accident which I hear has happened to Lord Fitzwarine; and really I do not know—it is

very unpleasant that Sir Andrew, being as he is in many respect a most excellent man—it is very unpleasant, I say, that he should act in such a violent manner, putting all kind of odd suspicions in one's head ; but at any rate, my dear Sir, I think it would be better if the young lady proceeded at once to London, to the Earl of Aumerle, if he will take her under his protection. You see I give this advice out of friendship for Sir Andrew too : it would be so disagreeable for him if any strange accident, you know, were to happen to Miss Mandeville ; this dispute, you see, about the Rodenhurst property would occasion such out of the way surmises."

The whimsical and confused manner in which Croxall chose to couch the horrible doubts which it was evident he had himself conceived with regard to Sir Andrew, almost excited a smile on the lips of Lawson, amid all the grave distresses of the moment ; while that evident anxiety of the rector to hide his own conviction of the extreme villany of Luntley led Lawson even more highly to estimate the exertions which Croxall had made in his own behalf ; not omitting, in his caution, even so seemingly minute a point as the suspicions which his own servants might have entertained, had he ordered his carriage for his visit to the Manor House, but proceeding thither on foot, in defiance of the tempestuous night, to make his visit a secret one.

In a corresponding spirit to that in which they were offered, too, did Lawson receive the rector's assurances that he would keep an eye to the lone condition in which Miss Draycot and Lady Anne would be placed, till such time as Lord Fitzwarine should return to the Manor House, or the ladies themselves find it convenient to proceed to London.

Having thus discharged his errand of good-will, Croxall pressed upon Lawson the immediate necessity for his departure ; and Miss Draycot, Alice Morland, and old Bateman were summoned to join the consultation.

The equanimity of Miss Draycot's mind, and the firmness which distinguished that of Alice, enabled them equally to bear

this threatening of a new misfortune with at least an outward appearance of composure ; as to Lady Anne, overwhelmed as she appeared to be by the absence of her brother, it was determined to conceal the departure of Sybil from her till the ensuing morning.

The stormy night filled Miss Draycot with alarm for the health of Sybil ; for it was advisable that the fugitives should take horse for their journey, rather than excite suspicion by sending for a post chaise from the village, while to have proceeded in a carriage of Mr. Draycot's would have been to ensure discovery.

But Sybil smiled at Mildred's apprehensions ; other fears lay heavy at her heart, and, assuring Miss Draycot that she, whose childhood had been passed among the Welsh mountains, had perforce become inured to the rigours of the weather, she donned her heavy cloak, and, drawing its large hood over her face, to conceal her starting tears, embraced Alice and the lady, and, without daring to utter a word, hastened to join Father Lawson, who, already prepared for his journey, was awaiting her.

Fortunately the gusts of wind had now somewhat abated, and the rain, though it still fell, drifted only in light and partial showers, while the rising moon at intervals showed her face through the coursing clouds, giving to the travellers a hope of a more tolerable journey than they had at first ventured to anticipate. Dr. Croxall, in his anxiety to see his friend safe on the commencement of his journey, stayed at the Manor House till the departure of Sybil and Lawson, and then, with a promise of seeing Miss Draycot in the morning, took his lonely walk to the rectory.

As for Sybil and Lawson, no word passed between them till they were clear, not only of the park, but of the village of Draycot, through a portion of which they were necessarily compelled to pass ; when, however, they were out of its precincts, and were fairly cantering over the bye road which they had been directed to take by old Bateman, as a probable means of eluding the officers, Sybil felt her spirit somewhat rallied ; and, approach-

ing her horse nearer to that of Lawson, she said, with a *naïveté* which would have exceedingly amused some hearers, "Dear father, the conduct of Dr. Croxall to-night has been surely kind, and, in truth, more than one would have expected from a Whig."

Now, there was a very honest simplicity about the good father, and he took the observation of Sybil in a most direct manner, as if she had formed the most natural and proper conclusion in the world, in holding it as a matter of wonder that a person of Whig principles should perform a simple action of humanity. But the prejudices of the Benedictine were perhaps rather more obstinate, and his views less extended than those of Mr. Curzon, consequently he was more inclined to generalize his political antipathies than that gentleman, who, it is possible, had the remark of Sybil been addressed to him, would have bidden her beware of confining either vice or virtue to individuals, as an effect of any political or religious tenets.

The father, however, contented himself with replying, "Aye, Sybil, Croxall has been spoiled by being a Whig and a parson : he has none of the decorum necessary to the latter character, and far from a sufficient quantity of the cold, hard scheming of the first."

At this moment Lawson interrupted himself to point out to Sybil a light, as if of torches, which had suddenly emerged from the side of the road which they were pursuing, and which now approached them at a pretty rapid rate. On coming nearer, they perceived a kind of rude litter carried by two men, and supporting the person of a third, who was bemoaning his own condition in a voice which was heard above the sound of the wind, which was again rising, and rushing with a melancholy murmur among the trees at the road side. These renewed gusts of wind had not, as in the earlier part of the evening, an accompaniment of rain ; the clouds were now rapidly driving off the sky, and the moonbeams, breaking through them, rendered almost unnecessary the torch which was carried by a country lad who walked by the side of the litter.

As Lawson and his companion drew a little to one side of the

narrow road, Sybil caught, as the torch, swaying in the night wind, fell full upon the litter, a sight of the person who was extended there; and, in spite of a bandage about the temples, and sundry small wounds or scratches which disfigured the features, she was at no loss to recognise those of Mr. Simon Turner himself.

On this discovery, which had been made also by Lawson, both he and Sybil, it may be well believed, hurried on their way without any inquiry into the cause of the lawyer's misfortunes, and with a strong hope that they had not themselves been noticed by that worthy person, who seemed, indeed, to be sufficiently occupied in lamenting his own sad condition, and abusing the peasants whom he had employed to convey him to his home.

CHAPTER XVI.

“The fire will get baith hat and wig,
As aft it has before that,
Before that, before that!”

SCOTCH BALLAD.

IT was about three o'clock in the afternoon of the day after that on which Sybil and Father Lawson had departed from Draycot, when the illustrious Prince William Duke of Cumberland sat soliloquizing in his closet. It may be imagined that the communings of so distinguished a person were equally lucid and profound. Such, however, was not the case, at least on the particular occasion to which we allude.

The truth was, that the intellects of His Royal Highness were somewhat obfuscated, from what cause we will not presume to determine.

That “Illustrious William! Britain's guardian name”—to whom, in conjunction with the Duke of Cumberland, the poet alludes—had, like most heroes, his own little weakness, being, as ill-natured persons report, very partial to “schnapps,” a bot-

tle of which was his constant companion. No doubt, "schnapps" are very excellent in their way, and were a great restorative to King William amid his fatigues as a soldier and a statesman. Still there is nothing regal or dignified in "schnapps;" and the general in a corner of his tent, or the grave politician in his closet, with a bottle of Hollands raised to his lips, is an object rather ludicrous than imposing.

Whether the Duke of Cumberland really shared in this predilection of his great namesake, we will not decide; especially since it was but three in the afternoon when his meditations were so out of joint, and lunch, not dinner, was the meal which he had just concluded. We think, indeed, that, if the Duke did not love "schnapps," he ought to have done so: for, emulating at Culloden the horrors of Glencoe, it might be well excused if he had also shared the weakness which brings down to the level of common mortals the hard, cold-blooded, selfish sovereign, who, to say the best for him, winked at and passed over that atrocious massacre, the contrivers of which, be it ever remembered, were afterwards promoted in his service.

If not very lucid, the meditations of the Duke appeared at least to be sufficiently agreeable; and, after muttering to himself for some time with an air of great satisfaction, he at last said, in a louder tone, "If I could but get rid now of this plaguy dizziness, I would go at once and speak to the King about Luntley. Well, I will keep quiet for the present: he is a right good fellow, that Luntley. Now, I will be even with that rascal Broughton yet; he is a famous fellow, is Luntley; and Slack, he is a famous fellow too. I should like to have five hundred Slacks to beat those rascally Commons for their shabby, nig-gardly, ungrateful conduct. Five-and-twenty thousand, indeed! What, as I said to Luntley, are five-and-twenty thousand, for a prince, too, of my deserts?"

The impulse of the Duke's just indignation seemed suddenly to disperse the mist that hung over his faculties; and, starting from his chair, he paced his apartment for about ten minutes, conning over his just causes of discontent. "Oh!" he cried,

with the air of a philosopher, as he again threw himself into his chair, "I am disgusted with mankind, disgusted! To see now how I am treated, who have exposed myself like a common soldier in the field" [to do the Duke justice, he did not want for personal courage, however wretched might be his generalship]. "Yes, yes," he continued, "I have done that, and what is my reward? Do I not see the mean Commons refusing me my just reward, and our pitiful ministers seeking all opportunities to make peace with my brother Frederick, who holds them in contempt? If they affront him about his Courts of Stannery, it is only because he will not serve their turn; I suppose, if he would, I might go whistle to the wind."

These last words the Duke pronounced with a very dolorous tone, and, shaking his head, he fell into a long fit of abstraction. "It is very extraordinary," he said at length, "but there is something most decidedly disagreeable to me about the Prince of Wales."

In this the Duke's judgment was at fault—there was nothing at all extraordinary in the matter. "Well," he continued, again rising, with a look almost vivacious when contrasted with the maudlin, sleepy cast of his countenance half an hour before, but spite is a wonderful sharpener of the intellects—"well," went on the Duke, "I have not forgotten my Lord Aumerle the other day, my polite, stiff-necked Lord Aumerle; ah, ah, I apprehend that neck is a little more supple for the Prince of Wales: so, so, my good Lord Aumerle, I will not forget old Luntley for your sake, and now I think will be as good a time as any to speak to the King."

The excellent Duke had wiled away so much time in his meditations, that, when he rose to leave his apartment, the duskiness of evening was beginning to spread over it. After passing through many long passages, he arrived at the door of a chamber in which the King was accustomed to pass his more leisure hours when he was at St. James's.

The Duke's application for admittance met with a ready assent, and he stood in the presence of his father.

The nursery song might have characterized the occupation of his Majesty at the moment of his son's entrance—

“The king was in his counting house,
Counting out his money!”

This, the historian tells us, was the favourite amusement of George the Second, whose purse was constantly in his hand, “not to give money away, but to count it over and feel it.”

The evening was somewhat cold; and a large fire was blazing in the King's apartments, near which the monarch sat, telling over his beloved gold by the ruddy light, which, as it fell upon his face, threw it into a strong relief, and, striking more particularly on the remarkably prominent nose, gave to his countenance somewhat of a haggard expression, which was not natural to it.

He rose eagerly on the entrance of the Duke, his favourite son.

“Ach, mein zohn, where have you been?” exclaimed the King, who used his own English in a most merciless style; “you stay from me day and night, just, I suppose, to add to mein plagues; what for you did not come to me before?”

“Ah, Sire,” replied the Prince, ogling his father with eyes, of whose unusual twinkling we will not say whether it was an effect of filial love, or a lingering record of the Burgundy at lunch.

“Ah, Sire,” pursued the Duke, with a great groan, “you are never out of my thoughts, and I am sure the conduct of the Prince of Wales is quite a load upon my heart.”

“Plague take den Brinz!” cried the King, passionately: “you speak of oder tings—he may go to de Teufel, wid his boets, and bainters, and drash.”

“The Earl of Aumerle”—said the Duke; but the king interrupted him.

“He may go to de Teufel wid his Brinz!” said the monarch, with a sulky air.

“But I have a mode to plague the Prince myself, your Majesty,” said the Duke; “it is about that very Earl of Aumerle,

too, who, I need not tell your Majesty, is one of those who encourage all my brother's undutiful vagaries."

"Ach, mein zohn, what for news next?" angrily demanded the King; "why talk to me of der Graf, what a man! is he not known? you talk next of de very Teufel, Milord Bolingbroke himself, and make your fader mad as one wild boar."

"But, if your Majesty would hear me," said the Duke, "a man has fallen in my way, a very honest man——"

"An honest man! mein Wilhelm," said the king "goot, goot, but what for that?"

This simple question of his Majesty was put with an air of surprise, as if he were curious to hear upon what description of man his illustrious son was pleased to bestow the epithet of honest. The "what for that?" somewhat embarrassed the Duke, who apprehended that even his father might not altogether subscribe to his definition of an honest man. "An honest man, your Majesty," he repeated, waiving the question by reiterating the remark which caused it, "and an injured one too."

"Goot again," said the King drily, "honest men have often a bad chance."

"Yes, Sire, and this man has been slandered," said the Duke, "vilely slandered by Lord Aumerle. Lord Aumerle, your Majesty, would take away this man's property, to place it in the hands of a Papist girl; and the man, Sire, for whom I speak is a Whig, an excellent Whig: a thorough useful man, never plagued with a ridiculous conscience; abiding steadily by the Low Church, commanding six votes; one who has an eloquent speech, and a full purse, ready to help your ministers at all times and seasons. In short, no other than Sir Andrew Luntley himself; for he, Sire, is the man against whom Lord Aumerle purposes to bring charges of the worst character, in revenge partly for his having laid information of treason against one Draycot, a friend of the Earl."

"Ach, what you say, mein Wilhelm?" said the King, his brow lowering as he spoke; "you talk of treason: we have de gibbet—de gibbet, Wilhelm, for traitors yet."

"Oh, this man—this Draycot, will escape, no doubt," answered the Duke, with a sneer, "since my right royal brother of Wales is prepared, of course, to interfere in behalf of all who insult his father's authority. No doubt, whatever be the treasons of this Draycot, if the Prince intercedes for him, your Majesty will spare! And, knowing how all people love the good Prince, no doubt Lord Aumerle has solicited him in his friend's behalf ere now."

The complexion of the King was naturally fair; but a dark flush had been stealing over it while the Duke spoke, which deepened to an absolute crimson, as, starting from his chair, with the fire light flashing strangely on his expanded blue eyes, he exclaimed—"What for, Wilhelm, you speak thus? do we spare? Mein Gott, can we spare?" And the King's tone, as he pronounced the last words, had in it the bitterness of a heart but ill at ease. "Mein Gott," he reiterated, "can we—could we spare? Would Balmerino have bled? Mein zohn; he had a noble soul, a soul which should have saved him if we could spare. And long ago, the wife of Lord Derwentwater; she was a fair woman, but her husband died!"

The violence with which the King expressed himself somewhat startled his son; for the disposition of George the Second was rather obstinate and phlegmatic than irritable. A silence of some minutes succeeded, during which the King gazed steadily at the fire, with a very dissatisfied expression of countenance.

The Duke was the first to speak. "So," said he, "the Duke of Newcastle has been chosen Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, and our dear brother of Wales is disappointed there."

"What!" cried the King, starting up with a sudden vivacity; "did Frederick expect that he would be chosen?"

"Without a doubt," answered the Duke, "and the people expected so much, too, for their learned and wise Prince; oh, your Majesty, it is a disappointment which will much mortify Frederick."

"Dat is good for him," cried the King, giving a table which stood near him so violent a kick, that it rolled upon its castors towards a pair of folding doors at the upper end of the apartment, which burst open with a crash as the table was hurled against them. The loud noise in the King's apartment causing all within hearing to apprehend that some accident had befallen him, several gentlemen of the Palace came rushing in, followed by attendants, bearing lights; and arrived in full time to see his Majesty, with a bald pate, apparently running a race with his wig, which he had snatched from his head, in an ecstasy of delight, on hearing how the Prince of Wales had been disappointed of his expected academical honours. His Majesty was evidently in high good humour, the wig flew so fast and so far, now frisking on this side, and now on that, at each impetus of the royal foot; the attendants and gentlemen present, of course, kept very grave countenances during this extraordinary exhibition. It is true that an old man kicking his wig about might seem to common people an exceedingly ridiculous sight; but courtiers know better than to laugh at kings; we will not say, indeed, that they looked at each other—but that, no doubt, was not from any fear of their own command over their risible muscles, but because they were admiring the graceful velocity of the wig—now skimming along the floor, now descending on the corner of a cabinet, and then reposing on a chair, still to be daintily tossed away upon the point of the monarch's toe; till, alas, poor wig! the King, having arrived at the very summit of his enthusiasm, fairly whisked it into the fire, and watched it parching and frizzling with a chuckle of delight; while his illustrious son, creeping close to him, whispered in his royal ear, "That friend of mine, Sir Andrew Luntley, your Majesty, if these slanderous tales should be reported to you——"

"Be content, mein knabe," exclaimed the King, who was sufficiently occupied with his blazing peruke; "we know Sir Andrew is one goot Whig; so, dat is enough. Why should he do bad deeds, to risk his neck? Since he is a Whig, he may grow fat, and keep himself safe. Oh, de Whigs can do dat."

CHAPTER XVII.

“ Give me not counsel ;
Nor let no comforter delight mine ear,
But such a one whose griefs do suit with mine.
Bring me a father that so lov'd his child,
Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,
And bid him speak of patience.”

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

It was on the same day that the Duke of Cumberland conveyed to his royal father's ear that false account of Luntley's position with regard to Sybil Mandeville which Sir Andrew had imparted to himself, that the Baronet, after receiving some communication from the country, in apparently high spirits mounted his horse, and took his way towards Putney. The day, though somewhat cold, was a fine one : a bright sunbeam played across the landscape ; and the young green leaves, dancing in the breeze that swept past them, the freshness of the turf, the merry chirping of the birds, and the gay appearance of the spring flowers in the gardens of the houses in the environs of the town, might have awakened kindly feelings in almost any heart but that of such a man as Sir Andrew Luntley. But the Baronet was one who, in his hard fixedness of purpose, his iron inflexibility of soul, was impervious alike to the influence of cloud and sunshine. In the magnitude of his intense selfishness, he had not a thought, a feeling, in common with the better portion of his fellow-men—wrapt for ever in his own dark, selfish schemings—never for one hour losing sight of how he might increase or assure that personal aggrandizement which he had already bought so dear. Thus it was that, with his hat drawn over his brows, looking neither to the right nor to the left, unheeding the sweet April sunshine, and the sweeter faces of the young children, whom that bright clear day had called forth in merry crowds, to rejoice in the presence of the green spring—unheed-

ing all these, and with wild, unholy hopes and fears still throbbing at his heart and brain, the Baronet rode on, till he reached the house which the curate, Wilson, inhabited at Putney.

Alas, for such men as Sir Andrew Luntley, for those who have not that superior sense—the love of nature! for the hard, the indifferent, who know not how to love the flower and the field! They know not what they lose; they know not how ill the careering of their mad passions repays them for the loss of that delicious calm, that sweet melancholy, which only the simple and pure of heart can know.

If ever there was even in the manner of Sir Andrew a semblance of care for others, it was but a result of his profound selfishness, and might be held as the symptom of some subtle scheme in his own behalf. From such a motive it was that, when dismounting at the door of Wilson's cottage, he delivered his horse to his groom, and entered the house with a light step, and an apparently anxious air.

"Miss Barnard, Sir, is somewhat better to-day," said the girl who admitted him, in reply to an inquiry made by Sir Andrew, and ushering him as she spoke into the little parlour of the cottage.

There was an extreme air of neatness, amounting almost to elegance, in that room; its few ornaments were well chosen, the vases on the mantelpiece of fine china, and filled with the fairest spring flowers.

Upon the walls of the apartment hung seven pictures, apparently portraits, but all of them, save one, veiled with black crape. Obscured as were the six pictures by the dusky and mournful covering which was drawn across them, it might yet be seen that they represented a beautiful woman and five children, from the ages of eight years to perhaps sixteen.

The unveiled picture was that of Wilson's daughter, Alithea; and she was there represented, not as she had been seen by the Earl of Aumerle, pale, wasted, dying under an insidious and fatal disease, but with the roundness of health, no less than of beauty, in her form, and its clear red glowing on her cheek.

Sir Andrew had visited the cottage before, on the day when, in company with the Duke of Cumberland, he encountered Wilson in the Putney Road; the strange and mournful trim of the pictures was therefore now unnoticed by him; but, perceiving through an open door that Alitheia was reclining on a couch in an inner apartment, with her father sitting by her side, he hesitated whether to advance, but finally so determined.

The curate had a book in his hand, from which it appeared he had been reading; but he now held it half closed upon his knee, while his eyes were riveted on the face of his daughter, who was sleeping. On a small table, near the sofa, was a vase of flowers, and a few others were scattered on the table itself; it would have seemed, indeed, as though the sick girl had been amusing herself with arranging those flowers, for she still held a few lilies of the valley in her right hand, her fingers occasionally closing on their stalks with a nervous, convulsive motion, as she lay stretched in a sleep which seemed uneasy, though profound.

Lost in the contemplation of his sick child, Wilson heard not the light and cautious step of Sir Andrew Luntley, and was roused from his abstraction only by the Baronet placing his hand upon his shoulder.

The curate naturally started, and, but for an immediate cautionary gesture from Luntley, he would probably have uttered an exclamation which would have broken the slumbers of his daughter; his face, however, when he beheld the Baronet, became very pale, assuming something of the livid whiteness which characterizes that of a corpse, and contrasting very painfully with the beautiful but fatal spot which glowed to a deep carnation upon the cheek of his really dying child.

"Your daughter, Miss Alitheia, she is better to-day, I hear," said Luntley, in a whisper; "but you will allow me a few minutes in the next room, dear friend—I have much to say."

The lips of the curate moved, as though he were making some reply, but no sound issued from them, and he gazed upon Sir Andrew with a half-dead, unconscious air, or like a sleepwalker with eyes indeed glaring wide open, but his senses shut. Moving

as though under some spell exercised by Luntley, he followed him into the adjoining room, took the seat to which the Baronet pointed, remained silent even while he summoned the maid servant to watch by the side of her young mistress, and carefully and softly closed the door between the two rooms.

These preliminaries adjusted, Sir Andrew took a chair himself, and drew it near the table by which Wilson sat: the marble paleness had now disappeared from the face of the latter, his colour went and came, his eye sank beneath that of Luntley; he was evidently nervous. The Baronet was firm, an unusual light was in his deep grey eye, and he smiled—the serpent lurked beneath the smile—Wilson seemed waiting for him to speak first, and he did so. “You have, I trust, Mr. Wilson,” he said, “since I last saw you, overcome your foolish repugnance to the proposal which I then made, and will grant me that trifling favour for which I am willing to pay so high a price.”

These words were uttered in a tone sufficiently distinct, but very low: not a syllable, even had the door been open, could have been heard in the adjoining apartment: as he ceased speaking, Sir Andrew’s eyes looked so keenly into those of Wilson, that the lids of the latter dropped.

“My repugnance, Sir Andrew, as you are pleased to call it,” answered Wilson, in a tone as low as that which the Baronet had used, “still remains the same. My determination is unaltered.”

“Surely, my dear Sir,” said the Baronet, with an insinuating air, “you have scarcely allowed this subject a due consideration.”

“Consideration is needless, Sir Andrew,” answered Wilson, “where the mind is already resolved.”

“Well, well, Mr. Wilson,” said the Baronet, complaisantly, “I think you are in an error—that you are about, at the eleventh hour, to become the victim of a foolish prejudice, which your strength of mind set at nought in the first. Thinking as I do, you will excuse me, if, to obviate this prejudice, I enter more minutely than I may seem authorized to do upon the pecu-

liarities of your present position. I will speak plainly, Mr. Wilson ; I will tell you that, since our last interview, I have learned from my friend Henriquez that he has known you under your new name of Barnard, which name, indeed, has alone so long concealed you from myself. From Henriquez, too, I have learned that you have imprudently ventured in the stocks, with the hope of increasing it, the property which gave you that name ; and that you have been so great a loser, that you have barely saved from the wreck the means of a most scanty subsistence : that last week, even, witnessed for you another heavy loss. I believe I am most correctly informed."

Here Sir Andrew paused, and, broken down by grief as was the unhappy Wilson, his spirit revolted at the matter of Luntley's speech : the colour mounted to his temples, and his accents, though low, were hurried, and even angry as he replied—"This is merciless, Sir Andrew—misfortune of every kind ; poverty, sickness, and death—lie hard upon me, but leave them to do their work ; wherefore would you still more oppress a fallen man ?"

"My good, Sir," said the Baronet, "you misunderstand me strangely ; I would fain relieve, and not oppress you more. Do not, I beseech you, shut your eyes to your own situation : consider your sick daughter, if not yourself. Did you not acknowledge, the last time I saw you, that the physicians have said that the mild air of the South of Europe might yet afford to her a chance ? Think, then, you have not of your own the means to convey her there, and that you refuse them when they are offered. And what is it that you refuse ? Merely to give me a written attestation that you did not perform a marriage, of which that it was performed by you you cannot advance the slightest proof beyond your own assertion. Dear Mr. Wilson, this is indeed midsummer madness ; you will think better ere you abide by so foolish a resolution."

The colour still went and came in poor Wilson's cheek while Sir Andrew spoke, and once his eye wandered round the walls of the apartment, glancing across the veiled portraits of his dead wife

and children, and settling on that of the still living Alithea. His heart throbbed heavily at that moment, for he thought, how on that very day the physician had pronounced the unfavourable symptoms as abating, and had again spoken of a milder climate. There was a contest then at the father's heart; but he looked at the other pictures—he remembered how remorse no less than grief had wrung his soul when he hung over their coffins whose shadowed semblances were in those portraits, and such remorse he determined to provoke no more. He rose from his seat, and with a hollow accent addressed Sir Andrew—“Tempter,” he said, “begone! enough of guilt and misery have you already laid upon my soul. Did I not owe to you the abandonment of those sacred duties, in the exercise of which I alone ever tasted true happiness? When I wronged the orphan, I felt myself unworthy to be the servant of the altar more. And, oh, God! thou knowest how, in looking on my dead children, I felt that their fate was thy just judgment on their father's guilt. No, no, Sir Andrew Luntley,” he continued with energy, “tempt me no more—they are gone, all gone, for whose sakes I permitted a fraud upon the orphan babe. Let Alithea live or die, God knows I have been enough punished in my attempts to amass wealth for her, my last, my only one; for the little which I had has all been swept away in the endeavour to make it more; but let it be so; if there even I think a judgment was wrought out, I will not feel that her father pressed her into the grave by a yet heavier guilt. Leave me, then, Sir Andrew Luntley, leave me with my child, that she may die in peace.”

“This is wretched superstition, Mr. Wilson,” said Sir Andrew, who had drawn from his pocket, while Wilson spoke, a paper with the attestation which he wished him to sign. “Why should you hesitate to put your name to this paper, when I assure you that the child of Gerald Mandeville is dead, and that I merely request from you this trifling favour, to silence the clamour of a set of my political opponents who have got hold of the absurd tale.”

"Sir Andrew," answered Wilson "your scheme is as hollow as it is base: you are not the man to care for clamour—something more lurks in the background; the daughter of Gerald Mandeville lives, and you know it."

"My good Sir," said Sir Andrew rising, and refolding the paper, "your spirits are weak, and I will talk to you no more upon this subject to-day; I shall see you again, and your mind will change."

Wilson turned upon him with a look of scorn, and was about to speak, when a noise was heard in the adjoining apartment; and, the servant, opening the door between the two rooms, appeared with a pale face and disordered air.

The fears of Wilson were prompt: he rushed to the inner chamber, followed by the Baronet: a slight convulsion agitated the limbs of his daughter as he raised her in his arms, but it passed away in a few minutes—then all was still: there was no mistaking that face, the glazed eyes, the parted lips—the girl was dead!—The poor pale lilies, emblems of herself perhaps, were still clasped tightly in her wan hand.

The father fell upon his knees, and bowed down his head on the bosom of his departed child.

His lips moved, as in prayer.

Did he thank God, who had given him strength to brave the last temptation?

But for the tempter, Sir Andrew, how did he bear the scene? He stood for some minutes, gazing as if spell-bound upon the corpse, the fair sweet face which looked so beautiful, though fixed and sad. Then, like one awaking from a trance, he drew a long breath, and slowly, step by step, backward steps, he quitted the apartment.

The groom wondered, as his master mounted his horse, what ailed him, Sir Andrew's look was so subdued and downcast. The Baronet was humbled: his fine scheme was thrown to the winds; the chain which he had forged a second time to ensnare the curate's soul was broken.

Oh! these accomplished, subtle, obstinate schemers; how often

do the most cunning contrivances of their villany fail, through what it pleaseth them to call a chance, through some slight circumstance, which they in their wisdom failed to foresee !

One might think they would have an eye to these chances, which so often defeat them ; but wickedness takes no lesson of experience.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ Then would a splendid city rise to view,
 With carts, and cars, and coaches roaring all ;
 Wide poured abroad behold the giddy crew :
 See how they dash along from wall to wall !
 At every door, hark, how they thundering call !
 Good lord ! what can the giddy rout excite ?
 Why on each other with fell tooth to fall,
 A neighbour's fortune, peace, or fame to blight,
 And make new tiresome parties for the coming night.”

CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.

ABOUT the same time when Sir Andrew Luntley withdrew, so crestfallen and dispirited, from the house of Wilson, an event took place in London, which well nigh made him amends for the shock which his bad hopes received from the sudden death of the curate's daughter.

From the door of an inn in Holborn there issued a gentleman, muffled up in a slouched hat and a cloak, and a young girl : as they sallied into the street the female drew the hood of her scarlet cardinal over her beautiful face ; and, pressing closer to her companion, upon whose arm she leaned, “ Dear father ! let me endeavour alone to find my way to the dwelling of Lord Aumerle,” whispered Sybil, for she and Lawson were the wayfarers. “ See, father,” she continued, “ what crowds of people—see how curiously they look at us ; surely

Dr. Croxall advised you ill; you will never escape detection in this busy city."

"This bustle and business, my child," answered Lawson "is, as the rector said, my best security; and for these curious glances which alarm you so much, be assured that it is your own timid and half-frightened air which excites them; look up boldly then, Sybil, like a city damsel, used all her life to the noise, and hurry, and confusion of the streets of London."

"I could look up and feel courageous, father," replied Sybil, "if I knew that you were safe; let me, as I but now proposed, seek mine own way to the residence of Lord Aumerle, and tell him all our sad news; and do you, father, go back to our inn, and wait there till my return."

"Thou art a silly child," said Lawson; "how shouldst thou find thy way, Sybil, through the labyrinth of London's streets? Be content—let me but once see thee safe under the protection of the Earl, and then I will have a care for myself."

Scarcely had the last words passed the lips of Lawson, when a heavy hand fell upon his shoulder, and a gruff voice exclaimed, "Take care of yourself! oh, no, good Sir, you shall not have that trouble."

"O father!" cried Sybil, clinging to Lawson's arm with an hysterical scream, as she looked, upon hearing him thus addressed, "that man, father—that man is the same whom I saw lurking on our road this morning."

Mr. Lawson too well surmised the cause of this detention; but, equal to good or evil fortune, he preserved his usual calmness, while he demanded the meaning of this rude assault in the public streets. The reply was, as he had expected, in a warrant of arrest, upon suspicion of being a Catholic regular; another person too now approached—the companion of the officer. It appeared that Mr. Simon Turner, having, ill as he was when he passed them on the road, caught sight of Sybil and the father, had, on reaching his own home, dispatched a messenger to meet the officers, who were then on their road from London, to in-

form them that Lawson had already left Draycot, and was apparently proceeding to London by a byeroad. The officers, altering their course upon this news, had immediately returned towards the Capital, and it was by a mere chance that Lawson had escaped an arrest even before he reached it.

This calamity, meanwhile, seemed to affect him only as it was likely to subject Sybil to some distress; and he earnestly besought the officers to allow him to conduct her to the house of Lord Aumerle, themselves accompanying him. On the refusal of this request, he endeavoured to move their feelings of self-interest by the promise of a liberal gratuity, if they would either of them undertake so far to protect the young lady; but the malice of Luntley had been most cautious and far-seeing. In all his proceedings against Sybil's friends he had taken care to secure in his own behalf the avarice of the law's myrmidons. Thus these men, who had already received much, and who expected more, from the Baronet, refused in terms the most insolent to accept anything from the priest, or to perform towards the orphan the act of courtesy which he had requested. That indignation to which Lawson would not yield on his own behalf touched him where Sybil was concerned, and he censured the unnecessary cruelty and insolence of the men in strong terms. The officials, on their part, listened to his animadversions with great coolness, and, unmoved by it, bid the Benedictine prepare to follow them forthwith to Newgate, in which prison he was to be confined. A crowd meanwhile had collected, and sundry coarse jests were broken upon poor Sybil, as the officers, rudely wrenching her apart from Lawson, to whose arm she had hitherto clung, hurried him away, scarcely allowing him to give her a hasty direction to proceed forthwith to the house of Lord Aumerle.

Fain would Sybil have followed the priest, even to that gloomy abode to which the malice of Sir Andrew had thus succeeded in driving her best friend; and it was only the brief but urgent entreaty of Lawson, his assurance that the only mode in which she could aid him was by forthwith proceeding to the

Earl, that withheld her. When at last Lawson was hurried away, Sybil forgot all else in her grief, and stood for some minutes, with clasped hands and streaming eyes, watching the priest and his rude conductors, as they hurried him towards Snow Hill.

Of the persons who had collected on the first arrest of Lawson, some, on learning that he was in custody on charge of being a Popish priest, had hastened on their way without taking any further concern in the matter ; others there were who, upon hearing the nature of his profession, had gaped at him with a wonderful air of astonishment and curiosity, as though it were real matter of surprise that a Popish priest should bear the speech and aspect of common men ; and these people, as if their eyes were not to be soon satisfied with a sight so extraordinary, followed Lawson and his conductors. In this train were collected some half dozen ragged urchins, who screaming, shouting, and hooting, as they went along, the news that a Popish priest was being taken to prison, drew to the crowd at Lawson's heels such considerable reinforcements, that he was speedily shut out from the view of the forlorn Sybil, who was recalled to a consciousness of her own situation, by the rude observations of the few lingerers, to whose curiosity her beauty and unprotected state had proved a greater whet than the announcement of Lawson's at that time abhorred profession.

"Don't cry, my pretty dear," said a bluff, burly-looking man, seizing Sybil's hands, "Popish priests are not worth reddening thine eyes for ; and, if you weep till you are blind, it will not save the old rascal from the halter which he deserves : a set of villains are these priests, who would bring down upon us the power of the Pope, and stick up the Pretender, to make true-born Englishmen worship idols, and live upon frogs, and wear wooden shoes."

"Truly thou art right, friend," cried another bystander, whose voice, remarkable as it was for a drawling nasal twang, drew Sybil's eyes to his person, which was tall and gaunt ; his countenance was lean, long, and narrow, with greasy-looking masses

of lank black hair hanging over his hollow cheeks, while from under his pent brow a keen, malicious black eye peered out with an unpleasant expression ; the garb of this man was a suit of solemn black, the extremely good condition of which might have intimated that he at least was upon no bad terms with the world. " Truly thou art right, friend," pursued this person, addressing in his sanctified tone the man who had first accosted Sybil, and who still kept his hold of the weeping and terrified girl—" truly thou art right : wolves in sheep's clothing are these Popish priests—wolves looking out to devour the lambs of the Lord !" Then, turning to Sybil, and bending on her a severe look, he continued, " And thou, maiden, cease thy vain tears, which, as this worthy man tells thee, will be inefficient to release that ungodly one from the strong hand of justice, which has overtaken him amid his evil deeds ; rather shouldst thou rejoice, thou silly maiden, to be freed from the darkness and the desolation of that prison in which, if thou art allied to the unsanctified one by kindred or chance, thou hast mourned since the hour of thy birth."

While speaking thus, the man in black had taken the disengaged hand of Sybil, and fixed his eyes sternly on her face. The natural spirit of the girl was, however, rising above the terror which she had experienced immediately on Lawson's arrest ; and, with an air of some haughtiness, she said, " I pray you, Sir, let me go ; you misapprehend—I have never been the inmate of a prison."

" Maiden," answered the man in black, with still more asperity in his looks and tones, " I perceive thou art indeed one of the ungodly—a castaway, I fear in truth, a brand already destined to the burning : thou vain and foolish one, without an understanding even for the words of grace, thy thoughts are of the world, and the world's vanities ; the prison of thy apprehension has bolts and iron bars, and is very terrible to those who, like thee, look on all things with the eyes of the flesh. Well would it be for thee, thou vain maiden, if thou wast in truth devoted to this prison, for verily it might be the saving of thy precious

soul ; but, maiden, there is a worse prison, and one to which I believe thou art destined ; yea, my spirit waxes low to contemplate thy doom."

Here the speaker paused, and, striking his breast, cast up his eyes, till little more than the whites were left visible, and gave utterance to a dismal groan, which was most emphatically echoed by a hideous-looking old woman, who, exclaiming, " Oh, the blessed man !" informed several of the bystanders that the gentleman in black was a person no less distinguished than Mr. Joachim Spiles, who held forth every Sunday at a conventicle in Seven Dials, and occasionally, for the more general benefit of the world, dispensed the doctrines of grace in the streets, and by the wayside. This announcement of the old woman was received with some interest, and drew several other loiterers into the group which surrounded Sybil, some being really disposed devoutly in the fashion of Mr. Spiles, and therefore anxious to hear how fierce a denouncement his piety could pour upon a young woman who had committed the enormity of traversing Holborn in company with a Catholic priest. And others, the vain ones of the world, as he would himself have styled them, promising themselves much sport from the rhapsody of the preacher, who, as if he had seen into their thoughts, and had determined to give them a full satisfaction, scowled upon poor Sybil more darkly than before, and, raising his right hand while he grasped hers firmly and almost painfully with his left, uttered a preparatory sound, something betwixt a groan and a howl—clearing his throat ere he levelled at her the thunders of his pious wrath. " Yes," he cried, " thou art verily a castaway, a doomed one ; thou hast walked with the idolater, with the Papist, and a prison is set open to receive thee ; yea, not a prison for the flesh, but one the bars of which will never move ; and there shall be darkness, and gnashing of teeth, and thy soul shall not escape from that prison, for Satan shall be thy gaoler and the prison is hell, maiden—it is hell ! Think of thy doom, then—think of thy doom, for surely thou art predestined to hell !"

This benevolent prophecy was received with a louder groan from the old woman, and some laughter among the ungodly ones who were among the crowd. Indignation had now quite subdued the remains of Sybil's terror; and, finding it no easy matter to extricate her hand from the strong grasp of the fanatic, she appealed to the bystanders. "I pray," she said, "if there be a gentleman among those here assembled, that he will exercise so much courtesy as to release me from the importunity of these people."

The fat, burly man, who had exhibited so great a terror of the Pope and the Pretender, still kept hold of Sybil's other hand.

"Surely," she said, with some anger, on finding that no one offered to interfere in her behalf, "surely these men have no authority to detain me; the misfortune which has overtaken my friend does not affect my liberty."

"Thou art doomed to hell, maiden! thou art doomed to hell!" growled the preacher; while the fat man endeavoured to manufacture a deep groan, which was however a failure, for fat stomachs make short breath, as well as "lean wits." The fat man, however, was not ill-natured—very fat people seldom are—and, finding his groan a bad experiment, he endeavoured to make amends for it by saying to Sybil, in a dolorous tone, "Ah, my good lass, do but listen now to what the worthy man says, and then I will take you home to my wife, poor thing, and you shall have something comfortable, and we will see what can be done for you. 'Tis surely a pity that such a pretty maid should be a Papist."

"I thank you, Sir," said Sybil; "I want nothing but to be allowed peaceably to pursue my way."

"And surely, Madam," said a voice from the crowd, "you are a free-born Englishwoman, and no one has a right to molest you—no one shall do so."

With these words, two young men made their way through the group, and, with no more ceremony than those worthies had themselves used towards Sybil, pushed the fat man and the gen-

tleman in black on one side. Mr. Spiles, however, was not a person to be set aside without a word; his denunciations cost nothing, and were ready for all who fell in his way. As Sybil, therefore, hastily bowed her thanks to her deliverers, the preacher turned towards them, exclaiming, in a solemn tone, "The devil will have you, young men, the devil. See you now that, but for you, that benighted creature must have had hearing for my speech a little longer, and perchance some word might have fallen upon her poor, deluded soul, like to a ray of light amid great darkness. But now she is, indeed, cast away—a brand devoted to the burning—which you shall share, young men, which you shall share."

"Nay," said the person who had first spoken in behalf of Sybil, "it were no great matter for regret to share the fate of so beautiful a damsel."

Sundry ejaculations of horror were then uttered by those who admired the peculiar eloquence of Mr. Spiles, and they betrayed some disposition to obstruct Sybil's departure. Her defender, however, made for her a new appeal: he pitted his oratory against that of Mr. Spiles—"Look you now, my friends, are we not free-born Englishmen?"

This proposition met with a clamorous assent; and Mr. Spiles, apprehending a decrease of dignity in the estimation of the mob, gave utterance to a fearful groan, and rolled up his eyeballs in a most ghastly fashion. Nothing affected thereby, the orator went on—"Well, then, my friends, being true-born Englishmen, have we not a right to do as we please with our own? And are not our souls our own?"

"Yes, yes," shouted twenty gruff voices in reply, much to the horror of Mr. Spiles and his fat coadjutor. The demagogue pursued his argument—"My friends," he exclaimed, in a voice so loud and clear that Mr. Spiles could entertain no hope that his own would be heard above it, "it is agreed that, as true-born Englishmen, we may do what we like with our own, and that our souls are our own. But here, my friends, we have a canting preacher, who would forbid us to do as we please with

our own souls. If the young woman likes to be a Papist, what is that to him?—her soul is her own, and she may do what she likes with it. Think, my friends; do but make the case your own. This lanthorn-jawed fellow would, doubtless, tell you that you are not to do as you please with your own souls, unless it happens also to suit his pleasure. What! are true-born Englishmen to be insulted in this manner? Shall we not go headlong to the devil, if we like it? But a fellow like this—a death's head, a walking mummy—is to say us, nay."

Loud shouts and bursts of laughter succeeded this sally; and Mr. Spiles, muttering spitefully between his teeth, "And you will go to the devil, young man—yea, into the bottomless pit"—was fain to sneak off, receiving, as he elbowed his way through the mob, sundry slight kicks and pushes from the people, who were so justly indignant under the apprehension that, if they did wish to go to the devil, Mr. Spiles would have a design to interfere, and prevent their doing as they pleased with their own souls.

Poor Sybil, meanwhile, was taking advantage of the confusion to slip through the crowd; in which endeavour she met with various obstructions on the part of some gentle creatures of her own sex, who elbowed her rather sharply, and at the same time gave utterance to ejaculations indicative of any feeling rather than that of sympathy with the forlorn girl—"Painted jade," "forward minx," and "worshipper of idols," being the mildest appellations with which she was favoured. This lack of female kindness greatly astonished Sybil, which astonishment would have certainly ceased, had she been better acquainted with the world. She would have known that woman ever finds her worst enemies in her own sex, especially if she be so unfortunate as to possess either beauty or talent, and the lovely face of Sybil might have excited the fury of a thousand shrews.

Thus it was, that, pushed this way and that, and galled and insulted by the gross insinuations which met her ears, she made her way through the limited but close throng which had been wedged about her and her chief tormentors, the fat man and

the preacher ; and now heeding not which way she went, and anxious only in the first instance to escape observation, with downcast eyes and burning cheeks, she turned again up Holborn. She had not, however, proceeded twenty yards, when she heard rapid footsteps behind her, and the voice of the young man who had released her from the importunate preacher. "Charming damsel," he exclaimed, in a tone the bold freedom of which offended and terrified Sybil even more than the denunciations of Mr. Spiles—"charming damsel, early violet, lily of the valley, first of the summer roses, or whatever else is beautiful and sweet, are you as hard-hearted as you are lovely, that you hurry away without vouchsafing one word to your faithful servants, who would dare fire and water, let alone the tongues of the saints, to defend you?"

Sybil had kept her eyes steadily cast down during this tirade ; but at its conclusion she raised them to the face of the speaker, with an intention of beseeching him to add to the courtesy which he had already shown her, by suffering her now to pursue her way to her friends unmolested. The extraordinary character, however, of his countenance fixed the eyes of Sybil in a kind of surprise, not unmingled with absolute horror and disgust ; the hideous features, the abominable squint, the sinister yet licentious expression, were enough, indeed, to startle the lone and unprotected girl. The half-frightened, half-amazed look of Sybil wonderfully amused Mr. John Wilkes—for it was that excellent personage, who, in conjunction with his admirable acquaintance, Churchill, had determined to chase to her abode, wherever it might be, the young girl whose beauty was no less uncommon than his own ugliness. The free air, and the rolling glance of the future patriot, whose youth was the worthy forerunner of his age, speedily restored to Sybil that sense of his insolence which astonishment at his most surpassing ugliness had at first subdued ; and, assuring him in a few words that, of all other courtesies on his part, she should most estimate that which would release her from his importunity, she slightly bowed to him and to his companion, and pressed hastily on. These

gentlemen, however, were persons not so easily abashed, and poor Sybil had reckoned most wofully without her host in supposing that they would retire on so gentle a rebuke. They suffered her, it is true, to proceed for about thirty yards unmolested ; but it was only that they might indulge in a laugh at her simplicity, and a surmise as to whether her modesty were not assumed. Then they were at her elbow again, staring rudely in her face, walking fast or slow according to the pace which she chose, and complaining in inflated terms of her cruel and perverse silence.

We have read somewhere, that this man, Wilkes, vicious and frightfully ugly as he was, made it his common boast that "he could win any woman in the world." For the taste and credit of the sex, we hope that the vaunt had its basis in the patriot's vanity, or that he should have added to it the exception of the witty Beatrice, "*if he could get her good will :*" at all events, it would have been only upon such a proviso that he would have won Sybil Mandeville, who now fled before him in a downright terror, which was well understood and much enjoyed both by Wilkes and his companion.

Finding that, whether she walked fast or slow, persevered in a total silence, or rebuked their impertinence, she still could not get rid of these men, Sybil hesitated whether she should not turn into some shop, and solicit its proprietors to release her from their molestations ; but the coarse and rude manner in which she had been treated by the people who had collected round her immediately on Lawson's arrest gave her little encouragement to venture on such an appeal ; and, perceiving that many streets branched down from the main one which she was pursuing, she resolved to take at a chance the next she came to, and trust to her fleetness of foot to release her from her tormentors.

The sun had now gone down, for it was noon day when Lawson and Sybil had arrived in London, and some little time had been spent in refreshment, and making a change of dress at the inn where they alighted, thus the day was already on the turn when they left it to seek the residence of Lord Aumerle ; and

the dim blueish shadows which now fell rapidly around, as the last streak of sunlight faded from the tall old houses of the shopkeepers, and the painted signboards that hung over their doorways, warned Sybil that evening would sooner close in the murky streets of London, than amid those sweet country scenes to which she had been from her childhood accustomed.

As Wilkes still kept close at her elbow, she cast down her eyes, that neither he nor his companion might see the tears of shame and anger which filled them; more than once, indeed, Sybil had stolen a glance at the passers-by, in hopes to trace in their countenances some lines which might promise sympathy, should she venture to claim it. But the glance was unsuccessful—the fixed, stern air of the plodding man of business, who went scowling on, evidently with thoughts fully occupied in counting up his profit and his loss, and the perk, sneering looks of the London dames, who tossed their heads on seeing Sybil so closely accompanied by two extravagantly dressed fops—for the attire of Wilkes and Churchill on this day was quite unexceptionable and peculiarly gay—these promised so little to Sybil, that, coming suddenly to a narrow turning, she put her resolve into execution, and darted down with a swiftness that fairly mocked pursuit.

Sybil ran till she was thoroughly out of breath; and then, compelled at last to pause, she leaned against the doorway of an old house, and looked timidly back, to see whether she was still pursued. Those dim blue shadows which she had observed floating along the main street were more thickly gathered in that in which she now stood. Amid those creeping shadows it would not have been easy to discover an object at any distance; but, pausing and listening anxiously for a few minutes, Sybil became satisfied that the young men must have given up the pursuit which had so greatly annoyed her, as otherwise they must by that time have overtaken her.

A quiet and dulness, which seemed strange when compared with the noise and confusion of the main street which she had just quitted, prevailed where Sybil now stood, and a chill fear

crept over the girl's heart as she glanced around her. On every side stretched away a labyrinth of mean dirty courts and alleys; the houses, tall and old-fashioned, seemed once to have been inhabited by a race of people superior to those who were the present tenants; but smoke and dirt now begrimed the walls and casements, in the latter of which a sheet of paper or a bundle of rags supplied the place of many a missing pane of glass; the doors of these wretched dwellings had many of them dropped from their hinges, and those which yet remained were mostly standing wide open, with a slatternly, miserable-looking woman, or it might be two or three wretched ragged children crouching on the stones before it. The shops, too, which were in those streets partook of the same air of squalor and desolation; a faint, disagreeable smell of onions, tobacco, and rank bacon issued from the doors of those houses where the provisions were sold, which, heaped in the windows behind the dirty glass, assumed its own loathsome hue: the other shops were mostly devoted to the sale of second-hand garments, or were occupied by brokers of the lowest class, whose stock of wormeaten chairs and tables, and creaking bedsteads, were in more than one instance piled up in ostentatious display upon the greasy, miry stones before their doors. Amid this scene of destitution, however, the houses where beer and ardent spirits were sold were of frequent occurrence, bearing even at that time an appearance of decency and comfort amid the poverty which surrounded them, and so faintly foreshadowing the gin palaces of the present day.

As Sybil wandered uneasily and in considerable apprehension among these dirty and labyrinthine streets, the doors of more than one of the houses were opened to give egress to some wretched, hollowed-eyed beings, whose rags and pallor told a hideous tale of the poison with which they solaced their miserable existence.

A sluggishness, no less than an abject misery, appeared to prevail in that spot: the oil lamps, which were now beginning to be kindled in the shops, burned dimly, and figures seemed in

the gathering mists to glide to and fro like the shapes in a dream, while the men and women, and even the children scowled darkly on Sybil as she passed; or, if they spoke, it was some half-breathed, mumbling sound—a moan over their own deplorable lot, and a malediction for her whose appearance seemed to betoken a better fate. Sybil felt a strong repugnance to accost any of these people, whom, from their evil looks and wretched appearance, she felt inclined to class among common thieves; but finding, after wandering up one street and down another, that they were all of the same class, and being evidently far from the great thoroughfares, while the duskiness of evening rapidly thickened round her, she addressed a man who was coming towards her at a slow pace, and, inquiring the way to Pall Mall, where the house of Lord Aumerle was situated, was informed that she had been roaming among the streets in the neighbourhood of Seven Dials—which place, miserable as it is even at the present time, was much more so in that of George the Second. The man to whom Sybil spoke was a half-starved creature, with scarce clothes to screen his emaciated frame from the evening air, which was now damp and chill. To Sybil's request that he would guide her to one of the open thoroughfares, he readily assented; and, leading the way towards St. Martin's Lane with more alacrity than might have been expected from his enfeebled appearance, they soon reached the many courts, which, at that time, defaced the mouth of the lane. At the entrance to one of these the man paused, and, turning suddenly round, seized the arm of Sybil with a violence which both pained and startled her, while, through the evening shadows, she could perceive his hollow eyes glaring wildly on her face—"Lady!" he exclaimed, in a hoarse voice, "I am starving—you must see I am; I would bear it for myself, rather than I would beg; but I have a wife, one who has stood by me in good and evil fate, and she must die in the cellar where I have left her, unless I can give her food and medicine to-night; lady, she must not, shall not die; you have a kind look, and you will assist us in our great distress, that we may bless you for ever!"

The humane heart of Sybil would not have required an appeal so urgent ; and, drawing a piece of gold from her purse, she put it into the unfortunate man's hand. A cry of wild delight burst from the lips of the poor wretch, when, on holding it to the light, he found that it was indeed gold which she had bestowed ; and, scarcely staying to thank her, or say that the court at the entrance of which they stood would lead her to Charing Cross, he dashed away at headlong speed towards the miserable locality from which they had just emerged.

Sybil now pursued her way, and had soon the satisfaction of finding herself in the main streets ; her total ignorance of London, however, led to a misapprehension of a direction which she had received from a person of whom, at Charing Cross, she had again inquired the way to Pall Mall ; and thus it was that she found herself, ere she was aware, involved in an immense and frightful crowd of chairs, carriages, and foot passengers, assembled before the little theatre in the Haymarket ; from these last came ironical cheers and laughter, as one vehicle after another turned away from the doors of the theatre ; both cheers and laughter increased to a most extravagant degree, when a magnificent carriage, with the servants wearing the royal livery, rolled up to the doors of the theatre. As to Sybil, becoming encircled ere she was aware in the thickest portion of the crowd, she had been driven very near the doors, and gladly accepted the proffered arm of a stout, tall countryman, who seemed greatly to enjoy the scene ; and who now, pushing his way with a force which nothing could resist towards the portico of the theatre, took his station against one of its pillars, in which position Sybil could hear all the strongly expressed indignation of the persons who were each moment turning in apparent disappointment from its doors, which disappointment was hailed with renewed laughter, clapping of hands, and every other noisy demonstration of delight on the part of the mob. In spite of anxiety and fatigue, Sybil naturally inquired of her new protector the meaning of this extraordinary scene. " Whoy, my lady," said the countryman, grinning in a style

which displayed to full advantage a double row of large white teeth, and with the very genius of fun dancing in his blue eyes, "you zee, my lady, the clever volks of Lunnon az juzt been bit a little. You zee, as there was a conjuror had promised he would go into a quart bottle bevore their eyes at thiz the-a-tre, and zo the grand volks would fain zee this wonderful zight; and here, you zee, they coom vlocking in their coaches and zix, having paid vor their zeats bevorehand; and, faix, the fellow has had the money from the doors, and taken himself off, zo they be all disappointed: my stars, I do pity them a deal; but, after thiz, let the volks of Lunnon make game of my Zomerzet-zhire lads, if they will. Zartain, the Lunnon volks zhould have long ears; vor they be wonderful loik my old ass, blind Jemmy, in their ways."

As the countryman ceased speaking, Sybil caught the words of a tall gentleman on her left hand, who, with a cynical aspect, addressed his remarks to another person, whose eye had been wandering with a sharp, active look from her delicate face to the large humorous countenance of the countryman. This last-named person was a little, lively-looking man, with a bold, high forehead, remarkably bright and piercing eyes, and a certain sarcastic expression of countenance, which might have been disagreeable, had it not been corrected by a look of equal kindness and humour. There was something brisk and bustling in the manner of this gentleman, as he turned suddenly on hearing himself spoken to; there was an air of some importance, too, in his dress, no less than in his manner; his skyblue coat was lined with white satin, his waistcoat of the same material, richly embroidered, and a bouquet of choice flowers was at his breast.

"A pretty display this is, Sir," said the taller gentleman; "highly creditable indeed to the nobility and gentry, that, while the dramatic genius of our country is fettered with all kind of fantastical regulations, our lawgivers forsooth, Lords and Commons alike, can be duped in this style by a miserable mountebank, and come to the Haymarket, in expectation that

a man will really go into a quart bottle, at the very time that they would curb the poet lest he should give the minister offence. 'Tis a fraud, Sir—a fraud, to pretend that the licensing of plays proceeded from a regard to public morals ; it was because they feared for themselves, Sir ; the stage is too powerful a weapon : they fear to have Peachem and Lockit over again ; it is satire, Sir, that they would escape—it is satire.”

Sybil marked a peculiar expression hovering on the countenance of the little man, as the tall one spoke thus ; and he replied, with a slight smile, “ It is perhaps less easy, Sir, for bad ministers to escape satire than you imagine, supposing even that they do exclude it from the stage.”

“ Aye, aye, Sir ; that may be true—very true,” answered the taller gentleman ; “ but, mark me, the drama will suffer ; it is a fantastical regulation which they have made, merely to answer a political purpose, but it is a new difficulty in the way of genius.”

These remarks were perfectly correct : under the hypocritical affectation of a care for public morals, the Act for Licensing Plays really concealed the care of the Whigs for themselves, for they felt the stinging satires of the stage to be dangerous to their power. It was not, indeed, likely that they whose cunning descended even to the composition of children's books, would leave in the hands of their foes so powerful a weapon as the stage. The arts by which their own writers sought to prejudice and warp the minds of the people are fully exemplified in a work which has long been ranked among the classics of the language. The Parson Thwackum and Squire Western of Fielding are characters drawn with an obvious design of throwing into contempt the High Church clergy and the country gentlemen ; it must be remembered, too, that the author, throughout all his works, intimates that these characters are not individuals, but just and unexaggerated specimens of a class. How the man whose genius and feeling could portray a character so beautiful as that of Sophia Western, could reconcile it either to his reason or his conscience to misrepresent so grossly

the old English gentlemen, and the clergy of the Church, is matter for equal wonder and regret, and furnishes, indeed, a lamentable proof of the extreme lengths to which men of talent may be carried by political prejudice or corruption.

But, to return—scarcely had the tall gentleman concluded his last petulant remark, when a more deafening uproar arose from the mob ; and, turning to ascertain its cause, Sybil perceived a fair, corpulent young man, richly dressed, issue from the theatre, and enter the carriage the servants attendant on which wore the royal livery. His appearance it was which evidently caused the increased clamour, the ironical exclamations mingled with which at once informed Sybil that this gentleman was the Duke of Cumberland. The countenance of the great general looked flushed and angry, and the style of reception with which he was favoured by the mob seemed not altogether to meet his taste ; for he stepped hastily into his carriage, and, with a rough voice, bade his coachman drive quickly. This, however, was an order with which it was in that dense throng well nigh impossible to comply ; and, as the Duke's carriage rolled slowly along, he was saluted by sundry appellations which might have been termed anything rather than complimentary. The various nature of these cries would, under circumstances less painful to herself, have greatly amused Sybil, who, truth to tell, entertained a most Jacobite detestation of the Duke of Cumberland : some shouted, " Hurrah for Will and the conjuror !" others, " You are not a conjuror yourself, Will !" while more than one voice was heard to cry, " Hurrah for Bloody Will !" and, " Here comes the Butcher !" which last title ; indeed, especially distinguished his Royal Highness among the people of London. These appellations of honour began to be showered thick and fast as the carriage of the Royal Duke was extricated from the throng, and pursued the flying wheels with great pertinacity. The repeated shouts of, " Hurrah for the Butcher !" " Three cheers for the Butcher !" seemed to give great umbrage to a coarse-featured, strong-built man, who stood near Sybil ; and, as it was at last uttered by a person within reach of

his arm, he forthwith dealt him a tremendous blow in the face, shouting at the same time, in a stentorian voice, "What if I be a butcher—I be also the famous Mr. Slack, what 's patronized by the Duke of Cumberland."

The similarity between the sanguinary nature of Mr. Slack's trade and the appellation which the character of his royal patron had led the Londoners to bestow had thus occasioned a kind of *equivoque*, under which that gentleman affected to suppose that himself, and not his patron, was the person whom the mob designed to insult, though Mr. Slack had, in truth, such a dear love for raw heads, that he would have fought quite as willingly on the Duke's part as on his own. It chanced that the person whom Mr. Slack had assaulted was ill disposed to remain in debt for a blow, even when dealt by so distinguished a character as the prize fighter. Mr. Slack, however, had given it with such right good will, that the man staggered, and thus gave him time to finish his proclamation of his own dignity and high patronage; but, as he drew himself up with an air, as he finished his boast, he was greatly astonished to find that he was seized by the collar, and to feel a blow dealt with accuracy, if not a skill equal to his own; his opponent had sprung upon him with the fury of a wild cat; but he was a little, puny man, whose strength by no means bore out his indignation, and Slack, shaking him off, would have demolished him with about as much ease as a child exhibits in crushing a fly, had not the crowd held the reputation of the pugilist as no point in his favour. Thus it was, that, while Mr. Slack roared forth his name and station, and proclaimed himself, again and again, the Duke of Cumberland's true man, he found himself, to his own very natural astonishment, kicked, and boxed, and thumped in such a style as sure no prize fighter of his celebrity ever endured before. With many oaths and vociferations, Slack now complained of unfairness on the part of the crowd, protesting that he would fight them all in their turn, but that such a pell-mell attack as he was now the object of was utterly against all rules.

"Arrah, my honey, be aisy now," cried a huge Irish chairman,

facing the butcher, as he uttered these remonstrances. "You see, I for one know your thricks of old, Misther Slack ; and was it not meself that you thripped into the guttther the other night? Take it aisy, then, and we will do the gentale thing: sure and it is at odd times, and by the sly, that you bring men into your debt, but we will pay you now at once, and altogether."

Much of these assurances was lost upon the butcher, who, highly excited, was endeavouring to buffet his way through the crowd ; this endeavour his Irish friend assisted by a smart stroke across his shoulders, which, being inflicted by the pole used in carrying the sedan, accelerated his progress in a mode more efficient than agreeable; and, to follow out his fortunes of the night, Mr. Slack reached his abode more bruised and weary than ever he had been in his life.

As for Sybil, it may be believed that the fray between the mob and the prize fighter caused her to feel considerable alarm : the good-natured countryman, though he would fain have been foremost among the assailants of Mr. Slack, at her request still kept close by the portico of the theatre, from the vicinity of which the butcher was speedily driven. The great commotion, however, which he occasioned in the crowd, drove a portion of it back upon the spot where Sybil and her protector stood. The light of the lamps in the portico fell full upon the girl's face, for the heat and pressure of the crowd had compelled her to throw back her hood ; and thus it unfortunately happened that she was recognised by Mr. Wilkes, who, along with Churchill, had hastened, after missing her, to enjoy the sport in the Hay-market ; it being pretty notorious, even before the evening, that the imposture of the bottle conjuror had at least so far succeeded in duping a portion of the public that a large audience was expected to assemble. A whisper passed between the profligate associates, when they perceived the girl ; and then, advancing with an air of consummate assurance, they rudely sought to force her away from the countryman.

"What now, what now, my vine vops?" said the latter, hold-

ing her in a grasp which defied the efforts of the admirable pair to loosen it.

"My good man," said Churchill, with a tone of affected confidence, "this unfortunate girl—I assure you we are in great trouble, but she is our sister; she has run away from her father's house; you will see now that it is proper to compel her to come with us."

These words were uttered in a low tone, and partly escaped the ear of Sybil, as the countryman bent down to hear them; but he then loosened his arms from her's, and, turning to the confederates, he cried in a voice full of anger, "Zartain, zirs, zartain; take her if zhe be your zizter, runned away from her veather's house; mine eyes, what a mortal deal of wickedness be in thiz here Lunnon!"

A loud scream burst from the lips of Sybil at these words; and catching again at the rustic's arm, she exclaimed, "Oh, no, no, good friend, honest friend, it is false, vilely false; I am not their sister—I have no father, no brother, in the wide world."

The sense of her desolate condition pressed hard upon Sybil, as she spoke, and she burst into such a passionate flood of tears, that the heart of the simple countryman again softened in her favour; and, taking her hand, he said, "Poor thing, poor thing; do not cry—think thee now 'tis a bad thing if thee be telling a lie, and have really runned from thy veather."

"My good man," cried Sybil, "be assured that I have, alas! no father to desert; my father has long been dead, and I am a stranger in London."

At these words Mr. Wilkes assumed an air of very honest indignation, and, seizing Sybil, he exclaimed, "Fie, fie, sister! it is terrible for one so young to be so practised in the arts of deception; come, come with me at once."

"It is indeed terrible, Sir," said Sybil, fixing her eyes on his face, "for one so young to be so practised in the arts of deception, but you will rue this insolence yet; though I am an orphan, I have yet, thanks be to Heaven, friends both able and willing to protect me: you will account to the Earl of Aumerle for this."

"Poor girl, poor girl!" cried Wilkes, still keeping his hold of Sybil, "it has come to this, then—her mind, I see, is affected."

As for the countryman, he rubbed his head, and looked doubtfully from Sybil to her assailants: the vile aspect of Wilkes seemed to mystify him—"Thee beest mortal unlike thy zifter, young man," he said.

At this moment a carriage, the progress of which through the crowd had been delayed by the scuffle with Slack, drew up to the entrance of the theatre, and a young man stepped from beneath the portico, at the same time sharply reprimanding the servants for having kept him so long waiting; the footman offered an humble apology, while he lowered the steps of the carriage; but, before the owner could enter it, Sybil Mandeville, who had caught sight of him, suddenly and by a violent effort disengaged herself from the grasp of Wilkes, and sprang forwards. "Cousin, cousin, Richard Frankley!" she exclaimed, "I never thought again to plead to you for assistance, but it is a small favour indeed, Richard Frankley, that I would entreat from you now; do but release me from the importunity of these men—do but say what you know to be the truth, that I am no sister of their's; and take me to the house of Lord Aumerle."

While Sybil thus spoke, her amiable cousin glanced alternately from her to Mr. Wilkes, of whom he entertained sundry disagreeable recollections, in connexion with his overturned carriage, and the couch in the mud with which, through the patriot's advice, he had upon that occasion been favoured by the mob. These reminiscences were unfavourable to the cause of Sybil, and, turning from her with a disdainful air, he exclaimed, "Really, Madam, I can have nothing to do with this affair; really, as to Lord Aumerle, I could not take such a liberty—I would not presume to introduce a person of your description to his house."

"Still the same," answered Sybil, in a voice and with a gesture full of scorn. "Shame, shame, upon you Richard Frankley! but it is well—you are true to yourself: the son of him who de-

sented a sister may well abandon a cousin thus. But I am not yet without a friend; the Earl of Aumerle is a true nobleman, and, little as you may think it, Frankley, he has a care for your poor forlorn cousin, for me, though my last friend—yes, though my dear Father Lawson has been torn from me by the cruel law which condemns that holy Catholic faith which I profess, and which you disgrace, Richard Frankley.”

These energetic remonstrances of Sybil had drawn the attention of the persons who were standing immediately about her, and fixed Squire Frankley in a kind of stupor of surprise; for that the Earl of Aumerle should be really the friend of an orphan girl, whom both he and his father had chosen to abandon to her fate, was a matter surpassing Mr. Frankley's comprehension. But the very head and front of Sybil's offending was in her allusion to the religious tenets which Frankley himself held; it was very well to be a Catholic, but he would not have owned it for the world. Sybil, under the impulse of her honest anger, had approached him very closely; but she was unprepared for the mingled rage and terror which his countenance exhibited, as he exclaimed, “Are you mad, girl, are you mad? Shall we make so vile a return for the clemency of our gracious King, as to complain in matters where we are not hurt ourselves? I know nothing of that Lawson—I know nothing of him. Out of my way, girl—out of my way; I have nothing to do with your treasons.”

With these words, Mr. Frankley pushed Sybil violently back, and sprang into his carriage amid a storm of hisses; for youth and beauty have great claims upon the sympathy of a mob, and cowardice none at all. As for Sybil, there was so little gentleness in the manner in which her unfeeling cousin thrust her on one side, that she would have fallen, had not that same smart little gentleman in the sky-blue coat whom she had before noticed stretched out his arm to support her. During the uproar occasioned by the appearance of the Duke of Cumberland, and the scuffle with Slack, this person had still kept near to Sybil and the countryman: and, unobserved by Wilkes, had very

keenly watched that gentleman's proceedings. When Squire Frankley drove off, Wilkes thought the field was again quite clear for himself; and, advancing towards Sybil, by whom the countryman still stood, he said, with an impudence which no man save himself perhaps would have assumed, "You see, now, fair sister of mine, that your cousin is shocked by your conduct; come home, then; come peaceably with me at once."

"I will zee thee hanged bevore zhe zhall go with thee, thee lying dog," cried the countryman, warmly; "I don't believe thee; zhe be no zizter of thine! And I will take her myzself, wherever she loikes to go, to any of her vriends."

"Out of my way, clodpole!" said Mr. Wilkes, with an air of contempt which assorted badly with his professed respect and affection for the "*people*." As he spoke thus, the patriot endeavoured to separate Sybil and her rustic protector. This attempt, however, was ill received on the part of the bystanders; nor would Wilkes have been longer allowed to annoy Sybil, if even the little man, who had interfered when she was so roughly thrust back by her cousin, had not again stepped forward. "Mr. John Wilkes," he said, addressing that worthy, "you know me."

As he spoke, the gentleman pushed back his hat from his forehead. Wilkes looked at him angrily, as though he were annoyed at being thus proclaimed and detected by an acquaintance. "Know you," he exclaimed—"in what quarter does the wind set now? I think I should know you."

Hereupon, the sarcastic look which at all times lurked about the stranger's face somewhat strengthened; and there was a significance in his manner, as he said, "And you know very well that I know this young lady to be no relation of yours: there, my good fellow, begone now—the game is up, the sport at an end for this time."

Such a mocking laugh burst from the bystanders at these words, that even Wilkes, in his majesty of impudence, was somewhat confounded, and fain to sneak off, in compliance with the advice of the stranger; but as, in company with Churchill, he

made his way through the crowd, he muttered to the latter an assurance that he would find means, if it were ten years afterwards, to be even with the person who he considered had played them so false by interfering in behalf of Sybil. While Wilkes was thus endeavouring to console himself under the defeat which he had suffered, the stranger was offering every friendly attention to Sybil, but the girl was little in a condition to be sensible of the extent of his kindness; her hurried journey, the shock of Lawson's arrest, and the fatigue and terror of her flight through the streets of London, had completely overpowered her, and she sank senseless in the arms of her new friend.

The freer air which rushed round her when she was borne out of the crowd partially restored Sybil, and she was sensible that those about her were lifting her into a carriage, but the swoon again fell heavily on her. When she fairly regained her consciousness, the murmuring of a low, gentle voice was in her ears; and, looking up, she perceived a handsome woman of lady-like appearance leaning over her.

The girl cast her eyes round her with an air of surprise: she found herself lying on a sofa in a spacious and elegantly furnished apartment; on a table near her were various essences, which had been employed to recover her. The occupants of the room, besides herself and the lady, were one who seemed a female servant, and the stranger who had so kindly rescued her from the insolence of Wilkes. The sight of this person quite restored the scattered faculties of Sybil, and, raising herself on the couch, she eagerly demanded the name of him to whom she was so much obliged. On this inquiry, the gentleman approached, and, taking her with a sort of fatherly kindness by the hand, he said, "You must keep quiet, my dear young lady: my wife will take care of you till to-morrow morning, when I will myself conduct you to your friend, Lord Aumerle; but, indeed, you are too much indisposed to endure more exertion to-night."

As the gentleman spoke thus, the base and cruel behaviour

of her cousin, Richard Frankley, rose into Sybil's recollection, and the contrast between his conduct and that of a total stranger forced tears into her eyes. "Ah, Sir," she exclaimed, reiterating her former question to her new friend, "you who are so kind, so unlike the world, tell me your name, for it is one which must be loved."

The stranger smiled, as he replied, "My name, young lady, is WILLIAM HOGARTH."

CHAPTER XIX.

"A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintain'd its man ;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more ;
His best companions, innocence and health ;
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.
But times are alter'd ; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land, and dispossess the swain ;
Along the lawn, where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth and cumbrous pomp repose ;
And every want to luxury allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.

Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen who survey
The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay,
'Tis your's to judge how wide the limits stand
Between a splendid and a happy land."

DESERTED VILLAGE.

It was the day after that of Sybil's arrival in London, that a melancholy group was assembled in one of the cave retreats of the coiners near Draycot.

The dull, smoky light of a lamp alone illumined that drear abode, though the sunbeams of a fair spring morning were shining joyously on the world without. The place had a desolation of its own, stretching as it did into far, rocky recesses, amid the

depths of which the imagination might have sketched out shapes even more doubtful than those of the gaunt, misery-stricken men who, ever and anon, moved with heavy steps across the earthy flooring, or were cast upon it in a sleep which did not seem that of repose ; or, lounging wakefully but idly, turned often an anxious look towards the persons who were assembled round a pallet which was placed in one of the recesses alluded to, at the remote end of the cavern.

On a small table near this pallet stood the single lamp before mentioned, the feeble light of which, while it left the greater portion of that subterraneous abode involved in obscurity, threw a sickly tint on the objects more immediately within its influence. Foremost among these was the tall muscular form of Grayling, who, with a despairing, evil look upon his dark features, sat immediately within the ray of the lamp, which threw his haggard face into strong relief, exhibiting the deep lines which grief and despair—it might be also guilt—had traced there. The eyes of Grayling alternately roved with a wild expression about the cave, or sank with a look of fixed despondency upon the wan countenance of the apparently dying man who occupied the pallet, and who was indeed no other than Robin Wyatt. Two other persons sat on wooden stools beside the bed : these were Lord Fitzwarine, and the honest Farmer Ashley.

Wyatt himself was the first to speak ; fixing his heavy eyes on the countenance of the farmer, he said, in a hollow tone, “ Come nearer, Ashley ; give me your hand. You have been a true friend to me. Oh, that I had always followed your advice—that I had, in the first instance, borne up more stoutly against the oppressions of Sir Andrew. But, Ashley, ask the good young lord if he will come nearer ; it pains me to speak so loud.”

The voice of the unfortunate man had scarcely risen above a whisper ; and Lord Fitzwarine, drawing closer to the couch, bent his head down to catch the words of Wyatt.

The wound which Robin had received, when pursued by the officers and Mr. Turner, was a mortal one ; and, thanks to the

cunning and pertinacity of the lawyer, the officers were compelled to pursue the coiners to their retreat of the pretended farmhouse. One of these officers, however, had long been in the pay of Wyatt and his companions; and this man was the same whom Lord Fitzwarine had overheard muttering his design of giving the coiners warning of their immediate danger. This design the man had executed; and consequently the wounded Wyatt was borne to the subterraneous retreat, in the gloomy vaults of which he and his companions had long been in the habit of casting their false coin. To this place the sick La Roche had been previously conveyed; the officers meanwhile, in company with Turner, searched the house, and arrested the young girl Lisette. She was the orphan daughter of a Frenchman of desperate character, who had died while associating with the coiners, and who had been introduced among them by La Roche, himself the son of French parents. Compassion had induced Robin Wyatt to take charge of this girl, and she had grown up to consider him almost as her father; but, with a caution prompted no less by a right feeling in behalf of this forlorn girl than by a care for his own safety, Wyatt had caused the caverns, and the secret entrance to them, to be most carefully concealed from her. In the present exigency, indeed, he would, had time allowed, have had her conveyed into them to conceal her from the officers; but his own dangerous wound incapacitated him even from giving an order to his men; and in their care for his safety, in their haste to convey him to the vaults, they totally forgot Lisette.

It was with very bitter feelings that the coiners bore Wyatt to those subterraneous abodes; for they felt that, now the farmhouse was discovered, their last retreat could not much longer remain secure. Wyatt, too, had been the chief supporter of their daring and guilty mode of life. A kind of madness had taken possession of that unhappy man from the time when, years before, he had, by the assistance it must be admitted of Farmer Ashley, escaped from Lichfield gaol. He refused in act, though he verbally promised to follow, the advice of the

good farmer, who, moved by the knowledge of the suffering which this man had encountered from the oppressions of Luntley, not only aided in his escape from gaol after the sentence which had been pronounced upon him for poaching, but also, and in no slight measure to the distress of his own family, assisted him with money. With this money he tendered advice, by which, as before observed, Wyatt led the farmer to believe that he would profit; and when they parted, it was with an expectation on the part of the latter that Wyatt would proceed either to London or one of the great towns, and open some kind of small shop with the money which he had so much distressed himself to bestow. To London Wyatt certainly did proceed, but it was with a very different design to that of the good farmer. Some time before his imprisonment, when first yielding under the influence of Sir Andrew's oppressions to riotous and disorderly habits, Wyatt had formed an acquaintance with a man named Stephen Grayling, who had been in the habit of visiting Draycot affectedly as a pedlar, but whose real trade was by no means so honest. The truth was, that this man was one of an organized band of thieves of the worst description, comprising in its numbers pickpockets, highwaymen, housebreakers, and coiners. To find some safe retreat, in which a few of the most expert of these last could be employed, for the profit of the whole body, in preparing the false coin, was most desirable. Such a retreat Grayling discovered in his wanderings through the wood and hill district in the neighbourhood of Draycot: that house which, when Lord Fitzwarine was conveyed to it, appeared so neat and well furnished, was, when first occupied by Grayling and his companions, a miserable dilapidated tenement, which had been deserted by its original owners many years before. Some of these men were skilful mechanics, and their ingenuity not only repaired the old house, but turned to excellent account the vaults and caverns in its neighbourhood, while the superstitious tales respecting the wood which led to this lonely retreat contributed for some years to keep it secret.

To join this Grayling, then, Wyatt hastened to London immediately after he had parted with Ashley ; and the money which the worthy farmer had hoped might re-establish him as an honest man, was devoted to the bad purpose of furthering the views of the coiners, who were by this time fairly settled in the hill tenement. The miserable state of the police at that time, and the audacious ravages of robbers and assassins, of which history furnishes painful details, may account for the organization of a band so desperate as that with which the unhappy Wyatt became associated.

The man, Grayling, amid all his darker qualities, had a kind of careless, reckless joviality, which hit the humour of Wyatt, who, bereft by the oppressions of Sir Andrew of all natural ties, and driven even into an abandonment of honest principle, became thereby the fittest of all instruments for such a man as Grayling, who quickly perceived that there was in Wyatt a quickness of parts likely to render him highly useful to himself and his confederates. Another point, too, which assured the destruction of Wyatt, was the strong attachment which Grayling conceived towards him. In the worst of characters we may yet trace some human affection, some kindly, better feeling, that links the outcast to his fellow-man ; this last spark of heaven, this plea for redemption, was in the wild, devoted friendship of Grayling for the man whom he so fatally aided Sir Andrew Luntley to destroy. It is sad to think that among these unhappy beings the last virtuous impulse should so often be the one to seal their earthly doom : but thus it was in the instance to which we refer. With blood on his hand, hard, avaricious, and cruel, Stephen Grayling never once disputed the wishes of Wyatt in his extravagant affection ; thus it was that he suffered him to offer an asylum to La Roche, to protect Lisette, and to rescue Farmer Ashley from the officers who were conveying him to prison—which act of gratitude had indeed proved their destruction, since it led both to the mortal wound of Wyatt, and the discovery of the long-hidden retreat.

The distress of Grayling at this circumstance, so dangerous

perhaps to his own life, was far exceeded by his grief at the certain loss of his beloved friend ; for the whole of the night and day after he had received his wound, Wyatt had suffered extreme torture ; but the sudden cessation of that torture, coupled with other symptoms of approaching death, convinced the experienced Grayling that mortification had commenced, and that the only being who had ever been able to attach his hard and reckless nature was to be very shortly snatched away.

Bitterly, when this conviction first passed over the mind of Grayling, did he swear to be avenged upon the lawyer, from whose hand Wyatt had received his death shot ; but, this burst of passion over, he sank into a kind of fierce tranquillity, under the influence of which he now moodily watched by what he knew to be the death bed of his friend.

That miserable man had requested Lord Fitzwarine to draw nearer to him ; and now he fixed his failing eyes on the countenance of the young nobleman with a look of anguish and remorse. “ My Lord,” he said, in a low, gasping tone, “ you are kind ; you think that a poor man can feel—you will believe that I would not die with a lie upon my lips, or seek at this moment to impose my own sins upon the soul of another ; but, oh, my Lord, bid the rich, who have no pity for the poor, beware ; alas, alas ! do not all my sins, no less than all my sorrows, lie on Sir Andrew Luntley’s head : and for how slight a pleasure to himself did he drive me into ruin ! My Lord, Farmer Ashley will tell you that I speak truly ; my poor but happy cottage stood in the way of his improvements, and his first step was to raise my rent to an amount which he knew I could not pay ; and then, my Lord, was it not enough to turn a man’s blood to gall, my wife, my children dying of a fever, and turned out on a winter day to starve ? I have been a desperate man since that hour ; many and great are the sins I have committed, and now they rise darkly against me ; but does not Sir Andrew Luntley also share that guilt ? It is fearful to feel, as I do now, that mine own sins may hurl me to perdition, and that they

are the work of another; but, tell me, my Lord, is there no hope—no hope?”

The tone of agony in which these last sentences were pronounced affected the compassionate Lord Fitzwarine, and the words of consolation which he breathed seemed to soothe the unhappy sufferer; for he beckoned Grayling towards him, and, bidding him bend down his head, whispered to him some words, which, as far as they met the ear of Lord Fitzwarine, seemed to have a reference to his own liberation; for Grayling, turning his head for a moment, glared fiercely at the young man, and then cried, in a savage accent, “No, Wyatt, not before the time I told you this morning—not even for you! By Heaven, Wyatt, the cursed La Roche was right, your tender heart has ruined us at last; but, if it rob me of you, my friend, it shall not rob me of my revenge.”

These bitter words, it may be well believed, excited no agreeable feelings either in Lord Fitzwarine or the farmer, both of whom had been close prisoners since the day when Wyatt was wounded, the coiners keeping even themselves fast in their retreat. Since the first day of Fitzwarine’s imprisonment, he had not seen La Roche, who, it appeared, lay in a vault distant from that which was occupied by Wyatt. Silly Jemmy had more than once appeared; but, taking no notice of Fitzwarine or the farmer, he had on these occasions moaned over the condition of Wyatt, with a degree of feeling very ill-assorting with his general malevolence.

A dark shade meanwhile seemed to pass over the countenance of Wyatt, as Grayling returned that fierce answer; then, as if fearful of the impression which it would make on the mind of Fitzwarine, he turned towards him, and said, in a faint tone, as though his strength were exhausted by his previous long speaking, “Be of good heart, my Lord—Stephen Grayling is rough of speech, but his hand will deal no harm against those for whom his friend’s last breath has pleaded.”

The head of Wyatt sank heavily on his pillow as he spoke thus, and his eyes closed in an uneasy slumber; for he often

started and muttered inarticulately for the half hour during which it held him. More than once in the lapse of that interval the eyes of Fitzwarine and the farmer encountered each other with an anxious gaze: during his first imprisonment, the spirits of Fitzwarine had been supported by the hope that he should see La Roche again, and learn something of consequence to the fortunes of Sybil Mandeville; but that hope was not only now greatly diminished in itself, but appeared of very little importance in comparison with his own position as a prisoner among a gang of reckless desperadoes; the consideration, too, of what Sybil, his father, sister, and friends, were probably enduring on his account, added in no slight degree to Fitzwarine's anxieties.

As Wyatt was now stretched in sleep, several of the coiners, who had been lounging in the distant parts of the vault, rose, and softly approached the pallet, to take a look at the dying man.

It was an impressive scene—the gloomy subterranean abode, half-vault, half-cavern; the dark, haggard faces of the coiners, men made hard alike by suffering and by guilt; the noble and intellectual countenance of Lord Fitzwarine, and the bluff, ruddy features of Farmer Ashley—strange to meet about the bed of the dying man, whose ghastly visage contrasted so painfully with them all. A dull, stifled sound suddenly broke on the ear of Fitzwarine; it did not come from the sleeper, but Grayling: the coiner, the thief, the man who had taken life, knelt beside the only being he had ever loved, and moaned in the anguish of his heart; while tears, hot tears, were on the hard hands which he had clasped over his face. Wyatt now awoke, and again beckoned Lord Fitzwarine—"My Lord," he said, "poor Lisette—she is a good girl; when you are free, oh, my Lord, leave her not to be the victim of the world—promise, promise."

Lord Fitzwarine gave the promise which the dying man sought, and then the eyes of Wyatt closed in a brief slumber; when he again opened them, his mind wandered, and

was evidently with the scenes of his former life, scenes in which Luntley had borne too prominent a part. He appeared to plead against the Baronet. "What, all — all!" he exclaimed—"all the cottages on the hill side, must they be pulled down, too? Oh, good Sir Andrew, they will take but little from your gardens; have mercy on the poor creatures who live there!"

After speaking thus, Wyatt was for some minutes silent, but tossed and moaned restlessly.

"Poor Robin!" sighed Farmer Ashley, "his thoughts are now with times long gone by; 'tis fifteen years, my Lord," he continued, turning to Fitzwarine, "since the cottages which he remembers so well were pulled down by order of Sir Andrew, and the ground on which they stood taken into the gardens of Luntley Hall: alas! thirty families were then dispossessed of a home."

"But did not Sir Andrew offer to those unfortunate people a refuge on some other part of his estate?" inquired Lord Fitzwarine, in a low tone.

"He did, indeed, my Lord," replied Ashley; "but the terms were so hard, the poor men could not take them; so some went over to the estate of Mr. Draycot; but the good Squire was unable to provide for them all; and others left the country altogether; while a few fell into evil ways, like poor Wyatt himself. But hark! my Lord, he speaks again."

"Yes, yes," muttered Wyatt, "I did shoot the pheasants; but do not deal hard with me, gentlemen of the jury—my children were all starving—my wife was sick—she was dead when I took the pheasants home, gentlemen. Home, too—such a home!—a shed made of boughs and mud. Oh, the rich, the happy rich! 'tis sport in them to kill a bird; but crime in a poor man, though his children starve. Does nature decree this difference between the rich and poor?—if so, she should make the poor insensible to hunger and to cold! Must we curse fate because we are poor—is poverty a crime?"

There was in Wyatt, while he spoke thus, that continual

change of position, that fearful restlessness which is so sure a token of approaching death ; while his voice was even unnaturally loud, rapid, and distinct : on his countenance, too, that awful seal was visible, the impression of which, when once beheld, can never more be mistaken. Grayling stood in stern silence at the foot of the pallet ; but, as the other coiners now closed round their wounded companion, many a bitter word was breathed in a low tone by them. In the mind of Lord Fitzwarine sad and solemn thoughts arose, as he listened to the ravings of Wyatt, whose misery was so clearly traceable to the oppressions of Sir Andrew Luntley ; and he became more than ever impressed with the awful responsibility of his own high station. He felt that the rich have indeed the poor given to their keeping, and that it is woe to those who prove unfaithful to the trust. Meanwhile, the frenzy of Wyatt assumed a new form ; he talked of babbling streams, and fields of corn, and of pleasant rambles in the merry greenwood ; wife, and children, and his artless cottage life, were all in the visions of that unfortunate man. “ Bring your wheel to the door, Lucy,” he said ; “ there now, we may talk while I cut the honeysuckle, and you spin—see how the sun dips behind the woods, Lucy—the boys should have been home before this—well, well, poor things, let them be happy ; the harvest moon will light them back again.”

At this moment, the idiot, silly Jemmy, entered the vault, and crept softly towards the pallet on which Wyatt lay. Suddenly the dying man uttered a piercing cry, and, sitting up in his bed, fixed his eyes with a glassy, unconscious stare upon those who surrounded it ; a solemn silence succeeded that cry ; then he stretched out his hand, groping, apparently, for some object which he thought was within his reach—“ Grayling, Grayling,” he said, in a low, husky tone, “ where are you ?—it is dark, but I thought just now there was a flood of sunlight.”

Grayling pressed forward to the side of the bed, and, assuring Wyatt that he was near, took his hand in his own.

"Ah! that is well," gasped Wyatt; "you love me, Grayling; you will not forget me!" Then he paused, and his cold fingers closed hard upon the hand of Grayling, while a terrible expression passed over his face—"Hark, hark, Grayling!" he cried. "Pray for me, Grayling! I am called—but another name has gone forth, yet another name!"

"What name, what name!" cried the idiot, eagerly thrusting himself forwards, while the working of his eldritch features contrasted strangely with the fixed and ghastly countenance of Wyatt.

"A name, a name, another name!" cried Wyatt, his lips moving as if by mechanism, not as though he answered a question. "Yet a brief space, and the voice shall again go forth, the voice that summons Andrew Luntley's soul!"

Wyatt fell back—a frightful rigidity was in his features; Lord Fitzwarine perceived at a glance that the man was dead; but the wild cry with which Stephen Grayling threw himself on the body was lost in the wilder yell of silly Jemmy—"Ah, ah, news for me, news for me!" he cried; "the name has gone forth, the name of Andrew Luntley—not long, then, shall my father wait—a brief space—why, that may be a day, a week, a month, not more, not more. Oh, oh, news; Andrew Luntley, prepare, prepare!"

CHAPTER XX.

"That which in mean men we entitle patience,
Is rank cold cowardice in noble breasts."

RICHARD II.

THREE weeks have passed away. Three weeks—a brief space indeed in the vast ocean of eternity, a brief space even in the span of human existence: but a moment may bear a destiny on its wings; and how many chances and changes for sorrow and for joy, what bitter despair, what excelling happiness, may be comprehended in the limits of three short weeks!

The great sorrow which may be known in that short space, that speck of time, had been deeply felt by the persons of our tale. There was grief in the house of Lord Aumerle: if wealth, and rank, or even virtue, could secure happiness, then grief should not have been there.

May, that month dear to young and innocent hopes, sweet May, with its sunshine and flowers, and its rural feasts, had now commenced; and its balmy air, and bright daybeams, while they called forth the butterflies and birds, and the white blossoms on the hawthorn spray, infused something of their pleasantness and beauty even into the dark streets of dreary London.

That bright sunshine and sweet air played cheerfully across the large breakfast parlour in the town mansion of Lord Aumerle; but the hearts of the persons who were there assembled responded not to the pleasant springtide.

Pre-eminent in sorrow seemed Sybil Mandeville and Lord Aumerle. Years could not have left a deeper shadow on the young girl's brow, but the lofty pride of her character kept that grief under control: there were no loud exclamations, no bursts of vain and womanish weakness. Three weeks had passed away, and yet there had been no tidings of Lord Fitzwarine, though a large reward had been offered by the Earl. The idiot Jemmy had been seen no more at Draycot, and the general fear was, that Lord Fitzwarine had been murdered—a fear to which his father and Sybil Mandeville were the last to yield. But fear had now strengthened into conviction even on their minds; and that conviction was so much the more horrible, that they had so long struggled against it. Well might the cheek of Sybil have lost its rose-leaf tint; well might grief be written on her brow, and that of Lord Aumerle. But the face of Sybil seemed to gain in dignity what it lost in freshness; though cold and pale as marble, it was serene and most commanding in its expression, like that of a being whose hopes and thoughts were not of this world. This majesty in Sybil's anguish endeared her to the heart of Lord Aumerle: her countenance, so pale and sad, but yet so fixed and calm, was indeed the counterpart of his own. The

Earl's sorrow for his son had no voice ; he had tried all human means to develope the mystery of his disappearance, and now hope was dead. From the report of the officers who had seized Lisette, who was still detained in prison, it seemed too probable that Lord Fitzwarine had been murdered by the coiners. Sorrow is seldom single ; and, amid his torturing anxiety for the fate of his son, the Earl of Aumerle felt an apprehension for that of his daughter, whose destiny he now found was involved in that of Harry Draycot. The evils which Sybil Mandeville so nobly struggled against at once crushed the less heroic spirit of Lady Anne ; her brother seemed lost to his family for ever—her lover still languished in prison, with the arm of the law stretched out to strike, and heavily did Lady Anne apprehend that the blow would fall. The severe punishment which had been decreed by the Court of King's Bench to those other Oxford students, who had been accused of drinking to the health of the Chevalier, awakened the most serious apprehensions in the minds of Harry Draycot's friends. For an offence so slight, and committed too in the heat of wine and the recklessness of youth—for this offence the students had been condemned to walk through the courts of Westminster, with a specification of their crime affixed to their foreheads ; to pay a fine of five nobles each ; to be imprisoned for two years, and find security for their good behaviour for the term of seven years after their enlargement.

The disgrace of such a punishment as this was most apprehended by the high-spirited and impetuous Harry Draycot. But the malice of Luntley had, it seemed, prepared heavier charges against him—charges which would, if substantiated, subject him to the penalties of direct treason ; and the legal advisers of young Draycot were fain to admit to his father that the case bore a bad complexion for him. Sir Andrew was ready to swear away the youth's life, and his cunning and his money had furnished him with evidence which would go to support his oath.

The blow which he had received from Harry Draycot was not forgotten, and Sir Andrew was to be thereby placed in the win-

ning position of one who had suffered and been insulted for the royal cause. The chief strength of the Baronet's designs lay in the evidence of a French dealer in foreign watches, snuffboxes, and other trinkets, who pretended that he had been long employed by the Jacobites in carrying on their intrigues, and that in his capacity of an agent of that party he had had dealings with Harry Draycot. It appeared, indeed, even in this early stage of the proceedings, and before the matter had come to a trial, that the character of this man was as little calculated to bear an investigation as that of Sir Andrew Luntley himself. But the friends of young Draycot knew but too well that the existing government would, as far as lay in its power, rather warp the law to obtain judgment against Harry than look impartially to find him innocent.

Under these trying circumstances, the Prince of Wales himself could do little more than pity and console ; for, truly amiable as was his character, he unfortunately lacked that energy which would have led him firmly to oppose the dignity and influence of his station to the ambition, violence, and ill qualities of his brother, who openly boasted himself the supporter of Luntley. The dispute of the Baronet with Sybil Mandeville had become the topic of general conversation. Little hope did the lawyers venture to give in her behalf, unless either La Roche or the curate Wilson could be produced ; and to find these men the most skilful agents of the police were employed ; for upon Sybil's claims it was sensibly felt that the fortunes of her friends depended, since the substantiation of those claims must utterly destroy Sir Andrew Luntley, who at present appeared as their sole and dangerous prosecutor.

Other troubles, too, pressed hard upon the unfortunate Mr. Draycot. The petty litigations in which he had undertaken to support the small gentry and farmers of his neighbourhood against the oppressions and insolence of Luntley promised to add pecuniary distress to his other misfortunes ; and the stout old Squire well nigh sank under their united burthen.

This was a sad state of things, and might well account for

the look of grave sadness which appeared in the features of the equable Alice Morland, on the morning to which we allude; and the more touching air of sorrow which spoke in the mild blue eyes of Mildred Draycot. Lady Anne, who had been much indisposed for the last few days, reclined upon a sofa, listlessly turning over the leaves of a book, with a vacant look which told plainly that its subject did not occupy her thoughts. The Earl himself was thoughtfully pacing the room, while Mildred Draycot and Alice were sitting apart with the old Squire, endeavouring to raise in his heart those hopes which they had themselves abandoned. As to Sybil, she was arrayed in walking attire, and sat watching with an anxious air the tear which she saw slowly stealing down the cheek of Lady Anne, whose gentle and affectionate disposition had much attached her, though indeed it would have been a sufficient claim upon Sybil's heart that she was the sister of Lord Fitzwarine.

As Sybil thus stood mournfully watching the sorrowful countenance of Lady Anne, the door of the apartment opened, and Mr. Curzon entered. Sybil had not seen Father Lawson since his imprisonment; and she had pleaded so hard for the indulgence, that Mr. Curzon had, on this morning, promised to take her with him on a visit which he designed to the Benedictine. The entrance of this gentleman roused Sybil, and, approaching Lady Anne, she took her hand. "Be of heart, dear friend," she exclaimed; "send me not to the poor father with the reflection of these sorrowful looks of yours upon my face. I will venture upon prophecy, Lady Anne—all will be well yet; I will not believe that injustice so great as that of Luntley will finally triumph: to contemplate the final success of that man would be too much, for then I should feel that my cause had ruined all my friends."

The voice of Sybil faltered as she spoke the last words; but they provoked a gentle censure from Mr. Curzon, as he drew her away from the Earl and Mr. Draycot, who each proffered a message of friendly remembrance to Lawson. "Dear Miss Mandeville," said the clergyman, "I shall rob my friend

Lawson of his office, and impose some grave penance upon you myself, if I hear you again make a remark so unchristian as that which escaped from your lips even now ; do not imagine the Earl and Mr. Draycot are so worldly as to impute any misfortune which may befall them to their interference in your behalf. No, Sybil, despite of any evil which may be wrought for them by the malice of your oppressor, be assured they are men who refer both good and evil to the wisdom of an overruling Providence ; and that, if you would increase the measure of their distress, that purpose can be no better effected than by those accusations of yourself being the cause of it in which I have heard you indulge before to-day."

"Ah! forgive me, Sir," cried Sybil ; "I acknowledge that your reproof is just, but admit that I am heavily tried ; were it not for this horrible uncertainty respecting Lord Fitzwarine, I could support all else ; but, oh, Mr. Curzon, I fear we must no longer nurse a hope for him."

"Nay, I do not myself abandon all hope even in behalf of Lord Fitzwarine," answered Curzon. "I have thought deeply, Miss Mandeville, on the matter of his disappearance, and am inclined to believe that, if he have—of which indeed there can scarcely be a doubt—fallen into the hands of those people who rescued Farmer Ashley, and who have hitherto contrived to elude the search of the officers, that their object has not been to take the life of Lord Fitzwarine—rather, I should imagine, they expect to answer some purpose unknown to us by his detention ; that he had been particularly sought by some of their number we can scarcely doubt, or wherefore the mysterious summons of the idiot Jemmy?"

"Ah, Mr. Curzon," said Sybil, looking up earnestly at her friend, "do not in pity teach me to nourish a false hope : I have endeavoured for the last few days to nerve myself to the belief that Lord Fitzwarine was no more."

"And thereby, my dear young lady," answered the Nonjuror, "you have perhaps given yourself a causeless anguish. It is neither religious nor philosophical to meet distress halfway ; it

is true, you may urge upon me that Lord Aumerle now partakes of your despondency, and that he has exhausted all possible methods for obtaining news of his son; but that which all our wisdom or ingenuity fails to obtain often falls to us by what many people term chance, but what I call Providence."

As the clergyman thus spoke, he pursued his way down Pall Mall, with Sybil hanging on his arm; for the extreme beauty of the morning had determined both him and the young lady to proceed on foot to the prison where Mr. Lawson was confined. This prison was Newgate; and, as Sybil waited for admittance at its dark-browed portal, her heart sank, as she raised her eyes to the gloomy walls, and it required all her recollection of the late admonitions of Mr. Curzon to restrain the tears which rushed into her eyes. Thus it was, perhaps, that she failed to notice a tall, meanly-clad man, who approached very near, and made a sign to attract her attention, while Mr. Curzon spoke to the turnkey; this man had, however, been loitering some time near the house of Lord Aumerle, when Sybil and Mr. Curzon quitted it, and, at a distance sufficient to avoid suspicion, had also tracked them on their way to Newgate.

On Mr. Curzon turning to speak to Sybil, while the turnkey withdrew his bolts and bars for their admittance, this man drew back, with a sullen, disappointed air, and, after watching the portal close behind them, commenced lounging up and down before the prison.

Meanwhile Sybil and Mr. Curzon, by virtue of an order of admittance to the prisoner, were ushered into the cell which the Benedictine occupied. It was an apartment small and gloomy enough, but not altogether destitute of comforts, since it contained a fire grate for cold weather, three chairs, a small table, and a tolerably decent bed. The bare, dusky walls, however, the window with its iron bars placed high in the wall, struck a mournful apprehension into the heart of Sybil, and, with all her calmness gone, she sank in tears at the feet of her paternal friend.

"Why, Sybil, my child!" said Lawson, smiling, as he raised

her, "what does this mean? Now shame on you; for you are neither a true Papist nor a true Mandeville, if you give me any tears on this visit. Come to me with tears, my daughter! Why, I had flattered myself now with framing a fine rebuke for the pride which I expected you would exhibit on seeing your old friend suffering in a good cause."

"Aye, Miss Mandeville," said Curzon, advancing, "we must indeed have no more tears, or my theological opponent, the father, will surely misdoubt the tale which I reported to him but yesterday from the lips of your good friend, William Hogarth, wherein the honest little painter set off in a style as vigorous as that of his pictures the heroism which Miss Sybil Mandeville exhibited in reproving the insolence of one Mr. John Wilkes, and the cruelty and cowardice of her cousin, Squire Frankley."

"Ah, that contemptible Frankley!" said Lawson, who, with his friends, had now drawn his chair to the little table which stood in the centre of the cell—"that contemptible Frankley! he is indeed a disgrace to his religion and his name: to me his conduct and that of his father seem an absolute contradiction to both. But, unfortunately, it furnishes but a pregnant example of that meanness in the political conduct of the English Catholics, which Sir John Hinde Cotton so long ago pointed out, in their support of that worst of Whigs, Sir Robert Walpole—good Heaven, could human baseness go a greater length!"

Too much truth, indeed, had these remarks of Father Lawson: the Catholics figured as the supporters of Walpole—that very man who, when it was proposed to restore the Triennial Parliaments, made the Papists his excuse for opposing the motion, though all their influence was at that very time being exerted in behalf of his own candidates.

Sybil Mandeville, meanwhile, would hear no word of the insult which had been offered to her by her self-seeking cousin, Squire Frankley, so anxious was she to wring from Father Lawson his opinion as to his own position. He told her, and truly, that he doubted from what had hitherto passed on his examina-

tions, whether Sir Andrew was prepared with proofs of his vocation sufficiently strong to satisfy the law. "It appears to me, my child," said the Benedictine, "that his malice has either overreached itself, and that, in giving his information, he relied upon some testimony against me which has been since withdrawn; or, on the other hand, that, in obtaining my committal to prison, he thought, by thereby showing me the dangers of my position, to seal my lips in your cause."

"Ah, dear father," said Sybil, "in that, at least, let him not be disappointed; have a care for yourself, for my sake."

"Sybil," said Lawson, taking her hand, "while you had in the world no other protectors than poor Alice and myself, I would not have stepped forwards with the avowal that, previous to the ceremony performed by the curate, Wilson, at B——, I united the hands of your parents in marriage. The rite which I celebrated would, it is to be regretted, avail you nothing in the eye of the English law; and my avowal of its celebration would not at that time—as I hope it may do now—have helped out other proofs of the falsehood of Luntley, whose constant assertion has been, that not even the voice of her own Church had sanctified the union of Emma Frankley with Gerald Mandeville."

"Oh, father!" cried Sybil, rising from her seat at these words, "you will not be so rash—you will not subject yourself to a heavy punishment, perhaps even to the loss of life, for the mere chance of slightly helping my cause."

"I shall do that, my child, which I feel to be proper, at any cost," answered Lawson.

"Be not dispirited, Miss Mandeville," interposed Curzon; "did not Lord Aumerle tell us yesterday that the good Prince Frederick has promised to keep an eye to the fate of Mr. Lawson, no less than to that of our friend, Harry Draycot? And, should we be able yet to prove Luntley the villain that he is, the authorities will, I think, scarcely care to press the penalties of the law against any person whose malicious prosecutor he has appeared to be."

These arguments failed to convince Sybil, who upon this occasion consulted her reason much less than her heart; and, finding it impossible to shake the resolution of Lawson to plead boldly, if he found it advisable on her account, to the very charge which Luntley had brought against him, she took leave of her early friend with signs of despondency which all her recollection of the late admonitions of Mr. Curzon could not enable her to repress. Thus it was, that, as she left the prison in company with the clergyman, she again failed to observe the man who had endeavoured to attract her notice before she entered it, while Curzon, occupied with his endeavours to console her, was equally inattentive. This excellent man had, since the late distresses of the families of Squire Draycot and Lord Aumerle, been their chief support and consolation, actively engaging in the search after Lord Fitzwarine, sustaining the spirits of the elder Draycot, or visiting Lawson in his prison, not, as during their intercourse at Draycot Manor, to hold with him an amicable dispute upon points of religious difference, but to discuss with the monk the probable issue of the contest between Sir Andrew Luntley and the friends of Sybil Mandeville, and to concert all measures which might afford a chance of turning back the designs of the Baronet upon his own head.

Thus then it was, that, being deeply engaged in converse with Sybil, Mr. Curzon also failed to notice the man who still kept close upon their track. They had not, however, proceeded far, when their way was obstructed by a crowd of persons who were assembled round a gentleman, who, upon inquiry, they found had fallen down in a fit.

"Poor creature!" said a woman, of whom Mr. Curzon had inquired the cause of the crowd—"I doubt it is grief and want of food have made him ill; I noticed him myself walking along so sorrowful like, before he fell down; and I am sure one would think he had not tasted food for a week, for his bones seem coming through his skin."

This account interested both the clergyman and Sybil, and they pressed forward to see the sufferer. He was a man in the

decline of life, and want and sorrow were indeed traced in deep lines upon his face, the expression of which, even in the deep swoon into which he had fallen, was resigned and patient. Affected by the appearance of the sick man, Mr. Curzon offered to assist the person who was supporting him, and thus for a moment he quitted the side of Sybil; at that moment the girl felt her hand earnestly seized by some person in the crowd—a small slip of paper was forced into it; and, as she turned her head, she perceived a tall, dark man, whose face she had a vague perception of having seen before. He bent down his head when he saw the eyes of Sybil fixed upon him; and then, glancing at Mr. Curzon, who was occupied with the sick man, who seemed recovering from his swoon, he whispered, “Look to the paper I have given you, lady, but say not a word to your friend; you are trusted, but beware if you break the trust.”

Sybil would have inquired the meaning of these words, but the man, darting upon her a significant look, withdrew from the place where he stood, and elbowed his way through the crowd: he was the same person who had watched her that morning from the time she had left the house of Lord Aumerle.

This incident had passed unnoticed by Mr. Curzon, in his anxiety for the unfortunate stranger, to whom, as he now appeared reviving, the clergyman addressed a compassionate inquiry as to his name and place of abode. The stranger gazed vacantly at Mr. Curzon, as though unconscious of the meaning of his words; but, his eyes happening to fall upon the face of Sybil, who stood before him, a strong spasm shook his frame, and a look of anguish and surprise passed over his face; then he turned hastily to speak to Mr. Curzon, but his extreme weakness again overcame him—the half-formed words died upon his lips, and, with a deep sigh, he relapsed into insensibility. Meanwhile, the mob which had gathered round him expressed contrary opinions—some recommending that the stranger should be conveyed forthwith to an hospital; others, more inhuman, noticing with a sneer his faded attire, observed that he was without doubt some lazy-vagrant, who made a pretence of illness in order to

excite compassion ; while a few proposed to carry him to the nearest chemist's shop.

"A chemist's shop, indeed !" cried the woman who had before spoken to Mr. Curzon—"a chemist's shop ! why a bason of broth would do the poor man more good than all the nasty drugs of all the chemists in London ; come now, my lads," she continued, turning to a couple of stout young men, "be charitable, and carry this poor gentleman to my house ; it is the first fruiterer's shop that you come to in Newgate-street, and then I will see what I can do for him ; come now, let us leave it to the rich to be uncharitable : God help us, if we who are poor cannot take pity on one another !"

No one could refuse to aid in the generous intent of this woman, and accordingly the two young men released Mr. Curzon, who was still supporting the sick stranger. An appointment which the former had made rendered it impossible for him to follow his inclination, which would have been to watch by this person till his recovery. Turning, therefore, to the woman, whose neat but humble attire showed how much of real charity she must have, who, in spite of her own poverty, could step forward to succour one who seemed more unfortunate than herself, he inquired her name, spoke a few words in commendation of the part which she had taken, and then, giving her some money together with a card of his own address, bade her, should he sufficiently revive, learn that of the stranger ; but, in case the latter remained too ill to be removed from her house, to let him know, and he would be answerable for any expense which she might encounter.

"The Lord reward your reverence !" said the woman, curtsying, after she had looked at the card—"I will be sure and let your reverence know how the poor gentleman goes on : and my name, Sir, is Widow Hammond, at the little fruit shop in Newgate-street."

"I shall remember that name," said Sybil, to Mr. Curzon, as she walked homewards, "as the name of a good and kind woman. Oh, Sir, what a pleasure it is to find that there are good

hearts in the world ! how many worthy people I have known and as yet only one Sir Andrew Luntley ! What a pity it is that it should be so much more easy to effect evil than to do good ; you now, Sir, and the excellent Earl, and Squire Draycot, and dear Father Lawson ! one bad man, this vile Sir Andrew, has caused unhappiness to people so amiable, has singly done more evil than your united virtues could do good ; alas, Sir, why should this be ?”

“To ask that question, my dear child,” answered Mr. Curzon, “is in some measure to impugn the wisdom even of Divine Providence, who, in a manner inscrutable to our weak comprehension, worketh good out of evil ; but, if for no other purpose, we may believe that the Sir Andrew Luntleys live, to test the constancy of those who are better than themselves.”

This reply, perhaps, did not altogether satisfy Sybil, whose young and warm heart could not contemplate with a due patience good and virtuous people enduring deep grief at the hand of Luntley. The paper, too, which when she had received it, she had thrust hastily into her bosom, now recurred to her mind, and she was inclined to show it to Mr. Curzon ; but the secret and cautious manner in which it had been delivered, and the threat of evil should she reveal having received it, restrained her, and she resolved at least to examine before she spoke of it.

Deception under any form was, however, a thing so new to Sybil, that she felt pain at practising it even for a moment : anxious, too, as she was to peruse this mysterious paper, it may be imagined how tedious to her appeared the remainder of the way to Pall Mall, and with what eagerness, on her arrival at the house of Lord Aumerle, she hastened to her chamber, and taking the note from her bosom, tore it open to examine its contents.

Little did Sybil imagine that the past morning had witnessed another circumstance of high import to her fate, and that in the sick stranger she had beheld no other than the curate Wilson.

CHAPTER XXI.

" With him went Danger, clothed in ragged weed,
 Made of beare's skin, that him more dreadful made ;
 Yet his own face was dreadful ; he did need
 Strange horror to deform his grisly shade :
 A net in th' one hand, and a rusty blade
 In th' other was, this mischief, that mishap,
 With th' one his foes he threatened to invade,
 With th' other he his friends meant to enrage ;
 For whom he could not kill, he practised to entrap."

FABRY QUEENE.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening of that day on which the paper had been given to Sybil Mandeville, that, wrapped in a mantle, and with a thick veil drawn over her face, she approached the church of St. Martin in the Fields, which, as before observed, was at that time blocked up with houses of a mean character. The beauty of the evening was worthy that of the day which had preceded it—a lovely May evening, with a light breeze, and a golden sunset, which not even the gloom of the London streets could wholly obscure.

On reaching the church, Sybil threw back her veil, and, looking cautiously round, seemed to be in some hesitation. A few minutes, however, decided her ; for, on looking up at the church clock, she perceived the minute hand pointing at the quarter after seven ; and, with a slight nervous shudder, as though summoning all her resolution, she approached the portico of the church, and, leaning against one of the pillars, drew out a white handkerchief, which she held conspicuously in her hand. Within three minutes of the time when Sybil took her station there, the same man who had given the paper to her in the morning started from the entrance of a murky court, opposite the church, and approached her at a rapid pace. " Thanks, lady, for this confidence," he exclaimed ; " it is generous : you are true to your

time, but we have none now to lose; will it please you to proceed at once to the dwelling of the person from whom I conveyed to you the letter?"

The face of Sybil at that moment was a trifle paler than usual, and her lip slightly trembled as she replied, "I know not, indeed, if I am not rather more confident than prudent; but the writer of the letter assures me that he can give tidings of Lord Fitzwarine; I would dare much to obtain news of him, though, alas, such are the plots in agitation against me, that I know not but that this may be one more subtle than the rest: but I submit to my anxiety in behalf of Lord Fitzwarine; I feel that a half-confidence is useless—I am willing to accompany you at once."

"Ah, lady," cried the man, "I perceive you do not know me; but believe, I could not do an injury to you—you are safe, lady, with me, as though you were among your great friends: this morning was not the first time of our meeting."

"I am at a loss to understand you," answered Sybil; "some consciousness I have of having seen your face before, but upon what occasion I cannot recollect."

"Ah, lady," replied the man, "you make but little of your good deeds, or you would not forget those to whom they are rendered; this may perhaps be well on your part, but it were not well for me to forget so soon the benefactress, who but three weeks since saved me and my wife from starvation; it was I, lady, who guided you from Seven Dials to St. Martin's Lane, and upon whom you then bestowed a piece of gold. Sweet lady, you will not fear to trust to my guidance now—you will not think I could harm you."

The earnest tone and grateful look with which these words were uttered would have banished any apprehension from Sybil's mind, had she still entertained it; and it was with a high hope, not only in behalf of her own fate, but also in that of Fitzwarine, that she now followed the man along that same labyrinth of courts through which he had been her conductor three weeks before. He paused, after about ten minutes' rapid

walking, at the mouth of a dark and narrow archway. "Lady," he said, "I promised those by whom I was entrusted to be your guide that I would give you, when we arrived here, the choice of being led blindfold to their abode, or of returning without that information which you seek. I do not mistrust you, lady, or believe that you would betray any poor wretches, however guilty, who mean nothing but good towards you. But some among those who desire speech with you are suspicious; and you must either submit to tie your handkerchief across your eyes, or return as you came."

Sybil shrank from this proposal; but a short reflection sufficed to show her that hesitation upon such a point was superfluous where she had already resolved to dare so much, and she passed her handkerchief across her eyes in the mode required. Her conductor then led her some way, apparently among confined and winding courts; for the air was close, and had an unpleasant odour. At the end of that time he paused, and Sybil heard him give three knocks at a door, followed by a peculiar shrill whistle. Immediately the door was opened; and it must be admitted that something of a shudder of apprehension chilled the girl's heart, as she heard it heavily bolted and barred after she had been led into the house. The bandage was then removed from her eyes, and she found herself standing in the dusky passage of what appeared to be an old and almost ruinous dwelling, the paint discoloured with dirt and damp, and in many places peeled off the wainscot. It appeared, however, that this house, miserable as was its present condition, had once been an habitation of the affluent; for, dark and gloomy as was the passage in which Sybil stood, it was wide and lofty, and at its termination was a spacious staircase, with the dim rays of the waning sun falling on it from a skylight above, and discovering the dark hue of the stairs, and their heavy twisted balustrades covered with dust.

The eyes of Sybil now turned somewhat fearfully from her original conductor to the man who admitted her to the house:

the survey was not satisfactory ; for his countenance, while it showed less of misery, betokened perhaps more of crime.

Little time, however, was allowed for her to indulge in any speculation respecting her present strange position ; for a hurried impatient foot came bounding over the staircase, an unearthly, but well-known laugh awakened the echoes of the old house, and, clearing twenty stairs at a spring, silly Jemmy stood before her.

In his hand the unfortunate being held a branch of moss roses, the earliest of the season—their fair, fragrant flowers, contrasting, like the beauty of Sybil herself, with the gloom of the place, and the stern countenances of its inhabitants. “ Ah, ah, lady, sweet lady, fair lady,” cried the idiot, forcing the flowers into her hand as he spoke ; “ the winter, lady, has been dark and long, but the pleasant springtime has now come, and the rose has put forth its leaves ! So, so, my father has work, much work in the dark winter—he deals with its desolation and its storm ; but he has nothing to do with the spring, with its bright sunshine, and its young flowers. He calls those who do his bidding to their homes in the sweet springtime ; oh, oh, he makes ready now for a staunch servant : Andrew Luntley, prepare ! prepare ! But you, fair lady, oh, be glad ; it is the time for the young rose, and the time for you : follow me, follow me.”

The more than usually wild matter and manner of the idiot’s speech passed unnoticed by Sybil, in her eagerness to elicit from him something respecting the fate of her lover who had been by his cunning decoyed from Draycot ; and, heedless of any danger, she sprang after silly Jemmy, up the wide but dim staircase. Unacquainted, however as she was with the house, she could not keep pace with the idiot, who, on reaching the top of the stairs, darted down a narrow passage, and was lost to her sight in the gathering obscurity of the evening. Sybil, though she still heard the voice of silly Jemmy shouting to her to follow him, now hesitated on the landing, till the man who had brought her to the house ascended the stairs, and offered her his guidance. Down the dim passage which silly Jemmy had entered she was then

led: the latter had now opened the door of a chamber at its extremity, to which chamber Sybil was conducted. This apartment, considering the apparent size of the house, was a small one: the wainscot, like that of the entrance hall, had originally been painted white, but, like it, had now assumed from age a dirty yellow colour.

A thick coat, too, of smoke and dirt obscured the single window, and with regard to furniture the aspect of the apartment was sufficiently miserable; the floor was uncarpeted, and a rickety table, some half dozen wormeaten chairs, a truckle bedstead, and an iron fender devoured with rust, made the total of its appointments. The brightness of the setting sun still pierced even through the begrimed window panes, and the evening had the warmth of a more advanced season; yet, in spite of this, a large fire blazed in the old rusty stove of this small apartment; and a man who was seated beside it stretched out his thin, trembling hands towards the blaze, as though he were suffering from intense cold. It was a large elbow chair in which this person sat; and the pillows which were placed around him, and the loose garment in which he was wrapped, no less than the sickly hue of his outstretched hands, told that he was in ill health. At the sound of the opening door, and the voice of silly Jemmy bidding Sybil advance, this man turned his head; and in the haggard, ghastly features, worn alike by disease, and the dark traces of malignant passion, Sybil recognised the stranger of Llewenge.

Sick, faint, shivering, as he was with illness, an expression of fiend-like joy, shot across the features of La Roche as the young girl approached him. "Ha! ha!" he exclaimed, "this is well—you come—you come, Sybil Mandeville; here, nearer, girl, nearer—you shall be lady of Rodenhurst yet—I have much to tell. Ah, Luntley! cunning devil, who outwits you now? Feed on dainties, and sleep on down—oh, oh, there shall be the gibbet, the gibbet for you yet!"

As he spoke thus, La Roche shook his bony fist with an air of malignant triumph, while the light from the fire, and the

last struggling beam of the sunlight, crossing each other, threw his ghastly countenance into strong relief, his hollow eyes glaring like the fire itself from their deep cavities, while the sallowness of his complexion, and his features wasted by disease till it seemed as though the parchment skin were drawn over the visage of a skeleton, so heightened the expression of that cruelty and revenge which was deeply seated in his heart, that Sybil, terror-stricken by his aspect, and the hollow, unnatural tones of his voice, shrunk away as though he were not human, and clung even to the poor creature whom her charity had saved from starvation.

This man mistook the cause of her terror: "Be not alarmed, lady," he said; "Mr. La Roche will do you no harm—your enemy, Sir Andrey Luntley, is also his."

At these words, La Roche burst into a loud, sneering laugh—"Thy enemy!" he exclaimed; "yes, girl, he is mine, he is mine; and we will hang him, girl—we will hang him. The gallows, the gallows, for the great Sir Andrew Luntley!"

"Ah, ah, the gallows! the gallows!" shouted silly Jemmy. "Prepare, Luntley, prepare! the voice went forth to call thee full three weeks ago!"

A deadly horror crept over the heart of Sybil, as she listened to La Roche. She had been ever haunted by the most hideous suspicions as to her father's fate; and now she apprehended that those suspicions were about to be confirmed. And this man, La Roche—with villain stamped so legibly on his face, who talked of gibbets for Sir Andrew Luntley—what share had he borne in the Baronet's foul deeds that he could threaten so much? Might not her father's blood be also on his hand? It was a frightful thought; but the high enthusiasm of Sybil's nature rose to the occasion; and it was in a firm tone she addressed La Roche, who, with his teeth chattering as in an ague fit, had sunk back upon the pillows. "You, then," cried Sybil, "are Philip La Roche. Oh, bethink you, what memories are in my mind associated with your name. Deeply, indeed, has Sir Andrew Luntley injured me; but ask yourself, whether his cunning even

had not been innocuous but for your's? And learn this, La Roche, that your tale must be indeed fair and free to gain credence with my friends: too much reason have they to suspect you. Why have you become just so late?—and where, oh, where is Lord Fitzwarine?"

A withering sneer curled the white lips of La Roche while Sybil spoke. He leaned again towards the fire, as though its warmth were necessary to keep up the vital action in his attenuated frame; but at the same time, turning his head towards Sybil, he peered up in her face, with an expression equally partaking of amazement and contempt. "Yes, yes," he said, nodding his head as she concluded, "I know it all. Poor thing, poor thing—I know you are really one of those silly creatures who have a faith in honour and honesty, and such like chimeras. But do not suppose Philip La Roche such a green fool, oh, oh," continued the wretch, with a chuckle that thrilled the soul of Sybil, as she listened—"oh, oh, do you ask why I am just so late? Just, laugh! what is it to be just? Hark you, lady, I will tell the truth; for you are here in my power, and it is quite safe to speak the truth. I have not sent to you from what you call a love of justice—no, no. I am influenced by a motive which the world understands far better—a love of self, lady, a love of self. Sir Andrew Luntley has deeply injured you—true; and I do not care for that; but he has injured me, and therefore will I help you to revenge."

"Wretched man," replied Sybil, "it is justice, and not revenge, which I seek. But, in mercy—if you know the meaning of that word—put me out of suspense as to the fate of Lord Fitzwarine; your letter spoke of him, or I had not ventured hither."

"Be content about Lord Fitzwarine, Miss Mandeville, he is safe, he is safe," answered La Roche. "And as to what you seek with regard to Sir Andrew Luntley, well call it justice, if it pleases you to employ such a dainty word—I have no time to dispute about words, young lady. And now, you will understand, I have sent for you hither, because you are the only person whom

I consider I can safely trust ; and, much as I long for revenge upon Sir Andrew, I am not inclined to risk my own neck in order to obtain it. Now, Miss Mandeville, I will furnish you with the means both of proving your mother's marriage and Luntley's guilt. But you must first swear to hold me scathless—to conceal for the present, from those whom you call your friends, that you have had this interview with me ; nay, even to depart this night for RODENHURST ; for there lies all the mystery of your fate—the secret which shall set Lawson, and Harry Draycot, and Lord Fitzwarine free ; which shall give you rich lands, and an honourable name ; and yield your foe, your deadly foe, to ruin."

"Alas ! what is this which you demand of me ?" exclaimed Sybil. "Bethink you, La Roche, whether I ought to place a trust in you. You require, too, that I should swear : can you value the oaths of others, who have broken every oath yourself ?"

"I believe that your oath would be to me a security, Sybil Mandeville," answered La Roche ; "because, as I before said, I know you to be one of those unfortunate fools who believe in that farce of virtue by which wise people profit. You are at liberty to give me your oath or not, Sybil ; but, if you do give, I know you will not break it ; and, unless you give it, no word more that affects your fortunes shall pass my lips."

"What, what would you have me swear ?" cried Sybil, with a harassed look. "Did you not say, too, that I must depart for Rodenhurst this night, and without the knowledge of my friends ? Alas, to what torturing anxiety should I not subject them ! Besides, I have not money enough about me to undertake such a journey."

"If the last objection, Miss Mandeville, be the chief one," replied La Roche, drawing a purse of gold from his bosom, and flinging it with a careless air upon the table, "let it cease at once : here is money to defray the expenses of your journey. I am, indeed, anxious that you should undertake that journey, as I am anxious for revenge. A little reflection will show

that you had best accept my terms. Say that you refuse them, then you depart from this house in the same manner that you approached it, uncertain even as to the fate of Lord Fitzwarine ; and assuredly with no means of retracing your steps hither, to set the hounds of the law upon my track. See, now, the worth of your virtue, lady ; it does not put you out of my power. But, before I tell you how you may develop the mysteries of the deserted Manor, you must, as I said before, make oath that you will proceed there immediately and alone, and in all particulars follow my directions."

"Alas!" said Sybil, "this seems to me indeed a rash oath : it is vain for me to bid you beware how you again betray the orphan, for you defy eternal justice even on the margin of the grave ; but I will put my trust in that Heaven which you, unhappy, man have set at nought : if your villany have but spread for me a new snare, I shall have in every calamity the consolation of knowing I have risked all for those who have risked their all for me."

"You will give me your oath, then, and depart for Rodenhurst to-night," cried La Roche, with a wild exultation—"brave girl, brave girl!"

A slight tremor, however, was in Sybil's manner as she took the dangerous vow ; at a sign from La Roche, the man who had conducted her to the house then withdrew ; but the idiot, Jemmy, crept nearer, and crouched at her feet, while La Roche gave note how she was to proceed on arriving at Rodenhurst, delivering to her, to be used there, a set of small and curiously wrought keys : hints, too, of horrible deeds there were in his speech, which blanched the young girl's cheek as she listened ; uncertain and mysterious were those hints, scarce seeming to justify the words of the idiot, who started up, as La Roche ceased speaking, and cried, with a loud voice—"Ah, ah—prepare, prepare ; my father waits ; he has waited long enough ; ha, ha, the halter first, and then the coffin and the shroud ! oh, Andrew Luntley, prepare !"

An hour afterwards, from the chamber of an inn, Sybil, in

great agony of mind, wrote to Alice Morland, imploring her to pardon the first act of the life of her adopted child unsanctioned by her approval: in that letter, too, Sybil bade her friends to be of good heart; concealing how much she was herself risking in their behalf, she spoke confidently of the defeat of Luntley, crowning all with the assurance, by which she was herself indeed mainly supported, that Lord Fitzwarine was alive, and well.

Before the dawn Sybil was far on her way to the deserted Manor of RODENHURST.

CHAPTER XXII.

“Take physic, Pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just.”

KING LEAR.

LORD FITZWARINE was indeed alive, and well, as La Roche had assured Sybil Mandeville; but, till that very night when she departed on her adventurous journey to Rodenhurst, he had languished in a weary imprisonment among the coiners.

In pursuit of his own object of revenge upon the lawyer, Turner, Stephen Grayling had detained the young nobleman and Farmer Ashley in confinement, in express opposition to the dying request of Wyatt. The certainty in Grayling's mind that the lawyer would be still indefatigable in tracing out the retreat of himself and his companions determined him for a time to remain there; and, to keep that retreat secure, he considered it was necessary to make prisoners of Lord Fitzwarine and Ashley. It was in vain that, after the death of Wyatt, Fitzwarine offered to secure to the coiner the payment of a large sum, if he would but allow himself and the farmer to depart; Grayling resisted the offer of money, and

treated with an insolent carelessness the assurance of Lord Fitzwarine that he would respect the secret of his retreat. The single white spot in the dark character of this man was his attachment to the deceased Wyatt, but he knew that he should himself have but little regarded a promise made under such circumstances as those of Lord Fitzwarine, and did not credit in another that good faith in which he was himself deficient. In a vault contiguous to that in which he died the unfortunate Wyatt had been buried, the night after his decease; but the blood of Lord Fitzwarine had run chill in his veins, while he listened to the rude eloquence of Grayling, as, ere the grave was closed, he addressed the coiners from its brink.

There was something of pathos in that address—he presented a picture of Wyatt's early life: he described his pleasant cottage home, the labour which he found sweet, the repose which the rich man had not then invaded. "But this," said Grayling, "was a state of things not to last—the cottage must make way for the mansion, and the peasant's garden for the rich man's lawn; the Jews of old made offerings on their altars, and the rich man offers up his holocaust to-day; but Mammon is the god whom he worships, and his offering is the life blood of the poor. Well, this is so, my friends, and we, like Wyatt, belong to this very wretched class; but it is not proper that we should complain; it is doubtless by a decree of nature that we are so unhappy. Have we the same form and feelings as the rich, or are they human, like ourselves? In good truth," said Grayling, altering his voice at these words, and speaking with an almost furious accent—"in good truth, when I see that the rich are indeed of another nature, then will I fall down and worship them for their wealth; but I have not yet learned so much; and therefore, as they are men, I will deal towards them like a man whom they have injured; and I will have revenge on the oppressor of my friend—aye, on the proud Luntley himself; and, for the reptile Turner, I swear, comrades, over this grave of the man whom he murdered, that, as he took the life of poor Wyatt, so also will I take his—I will have his blood!"

The deep, low muttered imprecations with which the coiners heard this vow fell so much the more heavily on the heart of Lord Fitzwarine, in that he had learned from Farmer Ashley that more than one of these misguided men had been driven, like Wyatt himself, into a guilty course of life, either by Luntley or others like him. Too just a plea, indeed, did he feel that the vices of the rich offered even to a man so hard and wicked as Grayling.

As to La Roche, he had recovered from the fit into which he had fallen during his interview with Lord Fitzwarine, and from that day his health had gradually improved; Grayling, however, would not allow him any further conversation with the young lord. Thus it was that La Roche, becoming daily convalescent, and himself fearful of Grayling, escaped from the coiners, with the assistance of silly Jemmy, whom he had for some time employed as a spy upon Sir Andrew himself; and, slowly making his way to London, arrived there three days before his interview with Sybil.

As a specimen of the tenacity of the idiot's memory, it is perhaps worth while to record, that, ere he took his flight with La Roche, silly Jemmy found means to enter the dungeon where Lord Fitzwarine was confined, and, bitterly reproaching him with the push which he, Lord Fitzwarine, had inadvertently given him on the night of Sybil's arrival at Draycot, assured him that he had borne him in mind for that favour ever since, concluding with the comfortable intelligence that he was himself going to see Sybil Mandeville, and that Fitzwarine would assuredly have his throat cut.

The situation in which it now appeared the malice of this miserable creature had mainly placed him was becoming truly intolerable to Fitzwarine, who, in conjunction with Ashley, had vainly formed various plans of escape, which were all defeated by the exceeding vigilance of Grayling. The same evening, however, which proved so eventful to Sybil as that of her interview with La Roche, was no less important to her lover. Something of an unusual bustle throughout the day Lord Fitz-

warine and Ashley had noticed among the coiners ; for Grayling had vouchsafed to his prisoners the slight solace of passing the weary hours of their captivity together. Footsteps had hurriedly passed their cell ; the voice of Grayling had been heard, speaking in a more cheerful tone than he had used since the day of Wyatt's death ; and from the man who brought their noonday meal the prisoners, without much difficulty, elicited that Grayling and his party had obtained news of a projected visit of the government officers to the glen that night, with Simon Turner at their head.

This intelligence did but increase the nervous anxiety of the prisoners ; but nothing worthy of note passed till some time after nightfall, when the door of their dungeon was suddenly thrown open, and, with a light in his hand, one of the coiners stood before them : his dress was torn, his hands and face stained with blood ; his tone, as he bade the prisoners follow him, was full of excitement.

It may be well believed that they, on their part, lost no time in obeying this most welcome mandate ; but, as they traced the hurried steps of their conductor through the long winding passages among the vaults, the sounds of contention, of loud and angry voices, were borne faintly to their ears, these sounds still increasing as they advanced. At length, a faint, pale ray, contrasting vividly with the light of the lamp, was seen streaming in the distance, which on a nearer approach proved to be the light of the moon shining in at the mouth of the cavern, between the boughs of those trees which the coiners had thickly planted before it.

“Quick, quick now, if you would have your liberty !” cried the coiner, as he issued from the cavern, and ascended a winding path which led from it to the summit of those cliffs beneath which it was situated. Those sounds which Fitzwarine and the farmer had heard so faintly in the cavern burst forth in one sudden deafening roar, as they issued from it, and then subsided into a silence, broken only by the hissing, crackling sound of a near conflagration. Five minutes' rapid walking made Lord Fitz-

warine and the farmer the witnesses of an extraordinary scene. On a small green platform, hollowed by nature among the hills which overhung the farmhouse formerly occupied by Wyatt, stood Stephen Grayling : above this platform, the hills again impended in dark, beetling masses ; in front it sloped gently towards the valley, to the right it immediately overlooked the house, and to the left was that winding path up which Fitzwarine had just been led.

To his horror, as he now advanced, the young lord perceived more than one dead body stretched upon the green slope below the platform, upon which slope stood a group of four or five officers, moodily regarding the space above them, where Grayling was posted with a dozen of the stern coiners about him, and Simon Turner crouching in the midst. Fully, too, was the meaning of the hissing, crackling sound, explained to Fitzwarine, as he perceived a sheet of red light soaring up to the right of the hill. He afterwards learned that, on arriving in the glen, the officers, accompanied by the officious Mr. Turner, had posted themselves in the farmhouse, which they supposed to be utterly abandoned, never dreaming that it communicated directly with the retreat of the coiners, whose numbers, indeed, they did not imagine to be so many. Their arrival, however, was the signal for Grayling to kindle a heap of combustibles which he had collected, beneath the principal apartment of the house ; and, the flames bursting forth with a sudden and frightful violence, a scene of alarm and confusion ensued among the officers, as they rushed from the house, amid which Grayling had little difficulty in securing the person of the miserable lawyer, whom he dragged forthwith to the platform above the house. A contest had then ensued between his people and the officers, in which the latter were, as we have seen, driven back, and two of their number slain. True, nevertheless, to the promise which he had made to the dying Wyatt, Grayling, now that he had secured the lawyer, resolved to liberate Lord Fitzwarine and Ashley.

“ See,” he exclaimed, pointing to the latter, and addressing

the officers, "there is your prisoner ; do you take him, and leave me the possession of mine."

A lamentable cry burst from the lips of Turner, as Grayling spoke. The officers seemed unknowing what measure to pursue : the outlaws doubled their number ; they had the advantage of them, too, in every way, for they were posted on the rise of the hill ; to attempt the rescue of Turner was uselessly to sacrifice their own lives.

Lord Fitzwarine and Ashley were, however, less disposed quietly to behold the lawyer murdered, which they perceived was Grayling's intention, and they advanced to his assistance. Their approach seemed to restore to Turner that power of speech of which he had hitherto been deprived by extreme terror, and, rising from his knees, he uttered frantic cries for mercy.

Then ensued a frightful scene : Lord Fitzwarine and Ashley were driven down the hill by the coiners : and Grayling, seizing the lawyer by the throat, dragged him to the edge of the platform, just above the burning house. Fitzwarine, hurried to some distance by the officers, could yet hear the wild yells for mercy which came from the lips of him by whom mercy had never been bestowed—could hear the loud voice of Grayling, mocking the agonized victim, as he held him pendent over the fiery abyss, and reminded him of that mercy which he had shown, and thundered in his ears the name of the unhappy Wyatt.

Thus did Lord Fitzwarine and his companion perceive the two figures, hanging, as it were, over the fearful verge of the eminence, boldly prominent in the red light which ascended from the blazing house, while the forms of the coiners, hurrying again up the hill, were more dimly defined against the moonlight sky : for one minute, perhaps, were those figures seen—the form of Grayling, gaunt, superior, and forbidding, with that of the lawyer grovelling at his feet. Then came a frantic spring, a closer grasp between those two figures ; they rocked for a while over the glowing furnace ; but Grayling wresting himself from the miserable lawyer, hurled him into it with a giant's force.

There was a hideous yell—a crash among the burning timbers, a jet of sparks, a brief deadening of the flames ; but anon they roared upwards with redoubled fury, spreading over the mountain's brow a lurid glow, amid which *one* tall dark figure was seen moving solemnly away.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn ;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green.”

DESERTED VILLAGE.

NEVER was there a lovelier morning than that of the twentieth of May in the year 1748.

The blue, transparent mists of the early day were yet floating along the neat and quiet streets of Bewdley, and rolling in heavier masses over the Severn, on the banks of which river that town is erected. But, as these mists were gradually drawn upwards by the strengthening sunbeams, Bewdley and its environs exhibited a scene of varied beauty, in which the town itself was no insignificant feature—the old and ruinous gateway at its upper end forming a picturesque contrast with the clean, airy streets and trim dwellings of that lower portion which stretches towards the Severn. Bewdley, hanging as it does on the side of a hill, commands an admirable prospect of that beautiful river. Now, too, as those morning mists slowly melted from its bosom, the stream appeared gay with navigation ; men were seen busily employed about the wharfs, and the light and elegant architecture of the bridge, which has its west end in Shropshire, and the east in Worcestershire, became visible. The townspeople, too, were now stirring, the shops set open in the market place, while in the environs of the town were all the pleasant sounds of country life—the clack of the mill, the lowing of rich herds of cattle,

as they moved to the pasture, the shrill crowing of the cock, and the warbling of innumerable birds, which had their nests among the romantic embowered cliffs which overhang the Severn.

It was at that sweet period of the morning when, though the sun has burst forth in his full splendour, a delicious freshness is yet upon the air, and a deep shade and a dewy moisture in the green woods, when a young female stranger issued from the door of the principal inn of Bewdley, accompanied by the landlord and his son, a stout boy about fifteen years of age.

This landlord was just such a person as the proprietor of a country inn ought to be—fat, rosy, and good-natured.

“Do be persuaded, now, young lady,” he said, “and let my boy, Gilbert, go with you the whole way to Rodenhurst; ’tis a lonesome journey, Miss; for the village and the Manor House are deep in the forest, though the Rodenhurst lands stretch away for many a mile, down even to the river’s banks. ’Tis scarce a place neither for a fair young lady to visit by herself; ’tis not now as in the good old days of the Mandevilles. The estate, you must know, Miss, has passed over to one Sir Andrew Luntley, whose only care about it is to squeeze from the tenants as much money as he can; so poor Rodenhurst has fallen off sadly since the time when I was young, when there was not a neater or prettier village in all the district of Wier Forest. But hard landlords make lazy, worthless tenants; many of the old villagers have gone away, and some of those who remain have earned for Rodenhurst no good repute; and therefore, young lady, you had better take an old man’s advice—let Gilbert go with you; for the forest is infested with poachers, who would scruple little to rob you, if you pass through it alone and unprotected: nay, keep the boy with you during the day, and come back and sleep here to-night.”

“I am truly grateful for these kind offers,” answered Sybil Mandeville—for she was the person whom the landlord addressed—“and will so far avail myself of them as to accept the guidance of your son to Rodenhurst; but the business which leads me there will detain me at that village for some days.”

"Well," answered the landlord, "I am sorry for that; but at any rate, my dear young lady, whatever you do, lodge as far away from the Manor House as possible; do not sleep even within sight of the park gates."

"My good friend," said Sybil, "why should I not go to the Manor House? Why, now, it is perhaps there that I must proceed."

"The Lord forbid!" cried the landlord, lifting up his hands with a gesture of real horror—"the Lord forbid, Miss, that you should go near that fearful house, to be frightened out of your blessed senses by the ghosts, and devils, and goblins, which have surely abode there ever since the death of the Lady Luntley, Mistress Deva Mandeville that was."

"Well," said Sybil, laughing, and endeavouring to force an air of unconcern which she did not feel, "if I am fortunate enough to escape the poachers, I will compound for a sight of the apparitions."

So saying, she mounted a horse which had been led to the door of the inn, and, bidding adieu to the worthy landlord, took the way to Wier Forest, with Gilbert riding on a stout pony by her side.

Fatigued alike by her journey and her anxious mind, Sybil had arrived at Bewdley late on the preceding evening, and had been fain to prepare for her adventurous visit to Rodenhurst by a night's repose. She had, however, risen with the dawn, and, sick as she was with anxiety, forced herself to take a tolerable breakfast, intending immediately afterwards to set out alone for Rodenhurst—an intention which, as we have seen, the good-natured officiousness of her host frustrated.

The important bunch of keys which La Roche had given to her—together with a letter from him to the person who had charge of the Manor House, and a paper of instructions to herself, of which he had commanded her not to break the seal till she arrived at Rodenhurst—Sybil carried in her bosom. And now her heart beat high with hope, mingled with a strange and harrowing apprehension, as, quitting the fair town of Bewdley,

she entered with her young guide the umbrageous shades of the neighbouring forest. The freshness of the early day and the early summer was there—the bright, soft green of the trees, which had burst into full luxuriance of leaf, yet uncrisped by the sunbeam.

Anciently of immense extent, Wier Forest may, even in these days of its shorn glory, boast of magnificent specimens of those noble trees which were of old the pride of Worcestershire and Shropshire. Still, as Sybil rode onwards, clumps of gigantic oaks threw over her head an awning of their broad arms, through whose thick verdure the strengthening sunbeam strove in vain to penetrate; while round their massive trunks clung a drapery of the dark ivy, mixing oft with the pale pink-streaked flowers of the “lush woodbine,” or the delicate sprays of the sweet-scented honeysuckle. Then, perhaps, there broke away a lovely open glade, just dotted over with knots of the tall, stately elm, or those trees growing at no great distance from the aged oaks, let in a ray of sunlight between their less-spreading branches, to stream in a line of golden lustre on the smooth turf which spread like a rich carpet through the forest, ever kept cool and verdant by the moisture of the trees. Sometimes, too, rose up, to emulate the spread even of the monarch oak, a huge beech; while the graceful ash abounded in the forest; and here and there, where a bubbling brook, tributary to the Severn, went murmuring along, might be seen the spiry form of the poplar. Every variety, too, of the beautiful fern was to be found among the underwood; and the morning breeze, which went whispering through the forest, was laden with scent from the white or pink blossoms of the hawthorn, or the more delicious perfume of the yellow violets which are found in this and the adjacent county; while the commoner wild flowers abounded there—thickets of the dog rose, long strips of the white bindweed, and tufts of the starry primrose, the purple and delicately-pencilled foxglove, black spleenwort, and butterfly orchis.

And still the winding path which the conductor of Sybil pursued presented a panoramic change of scenery. Sometimes,

sloping towards the skirts of the forest, the trees broke away from it, and permitted the eye to range along the vale of the Severn, to catch a glimpse of the vessels moving along the surface of the river, and anon hidden by the jutting rocks which overhung its banks; the grey masses of those rocks beautifully contrasting with the shrubs and lichens which grew between the clefts, and either waved over them in feathery tufts of green, or hung down on their rugged breasts in long festoons. Fair villages, too, and busy towns, and the glittering spire of many a distant church, might be seen from those breaks in the forest; and in its own vast embrace was many a changeful scene of swelling hill, smooth lawn, and fertile valley; while, in the deep woods, the timid fawn started to every sound, the tapping of the woodpecker was heard, and the brilliant note of the merry blackbird.

Now, too, as Sybil and her guide ascended a picturesque range of hills, the boy, pointing to a village that lay sheltered among the woods beneath them, exclaimed, "See, lady, there is Rodenhurst! but the Manor House is near a mile distant from the village—look there to the left—where the park stretches away into the forest. There is the church, too, not far from the park gates; and see, lady, there is the old house frowning among the trees; how grim it looks, even in this fine sunlight!"

The heart of Sybil throbbed heavily at these words, and a mist seemed to gather before her eyes, as they fell for the first time upon the ancient dwelling of her race. Many a fair field she perceived spreading away on all sides from the village, and encroaching on the forest bounds; while, in the direction of the river, the ground swept along, either in wooded dells, or hills swelling so gently from the level land, that, from that eminence which she now occupied, Sybil beheld a lovely view of the whole vale of the Severn, with Cotswold and Malvern stretching like a blue, undulating line in the distance, and the forest in the near ground. On descending that hill, the Manor House was hidden from her view, and a narrow bridle path led her sooner than she had expected into the village. The picturesque and romantic beauty of its

situation, when beheld from the hills, had nevertheless ill prepared Sybil for a nearer view of Rodenhurst. The very wealth, indeed, of nature seemed to make the misery of man a more painful object of contemplation. The first object which struck Sybil on her arrival at Rodenhurst was that village inn, which she had so often heard Alice Morland describe as a trim, comfortable dwelling, when she visited it in company with the unfortunate Emma. Upon an aged beech before the door, indeed, still swung the sign of the "Mandeville Arms;" but the board was cracked, and sun, and rain, and wind had blended the colours into one indistinguishable mass. A small pond, to the left of the inn, had been suffered to become stagnant, and was covered with duckweed; while the house itself had its casements broken, its thatch decayed, and bore altogether a dirty, desolate appearance. Its former worthy and respectable proprietors had long since departed from Rodenhurst; and, on Sybil alighting at the door of this miserable tenement, a slatternly woman appeared, whose red face might have betrayed indulgence in a liquor stronger than ale, and whose sharp voice and spiteful looks betokened a determined shrew.

It might almost have been supposed that the beauty and the gentle tones of the girl were a sort of offence in the estimation of this woman, so insolent an air of carelessness did she throw into her replies, when Sybil, doubtful as to what accommodation she might find at the Manor House, inquired whether she could rest that night at the inn.

This savage demeanour, even in persons whom we despise, has at times an influence on the spirits, and it was with a heavy heart that Sybil rewarded and dismissed her young guide. The shrewish landlady eyed the lad askance, as Sybil told him that she should surely come again to his father's house ere she returned to London; and then, as he moved away, muttered sundry spiteful ejaculations respecting persons, who, she said, gave themselves airs, "because, forsooth, they keep the Crown Inn at Bewdley."

Having ordered some slight repast, Sybil determined, while it

was preparing, to take a survey of the village before she proceeded to the Manor House. Never had she suffered under more painful feelings—never was there a task more melancholy than that self-imposed one, of witnessing the misery which her oppressor had heaped upon those who lived upon the land of her inheritance. Poverty, gaunt, starving poverty, with its dire accompaniments of sloth, and slovenliness, and rags, stared upon Sybil with every step she took through Rodenhurst.

The casements were dark with dust ; the open cottage doors, instead of exhibiting floors well washed, or neatly sanded, revealed only a scene of sluttishness and confusion—broken furniture, dirty and half-clad children, dark, scowling men, and women with shrill voices and heavy brows. The gardens, too, the pride of the English peasant in his happier days, were either laid entirely waste, or devoted to the cultivation of a patch of potatoes. There was something to Sybil inexpressibly mournful in the sight of the few flowers which here and there struggled up amid a mass of weeds, as if to remind the spectator that the villagers of Rodenhurst had once known an innocent enjoyment. It chanced that the particular hour of the day furnished to Sybil a full opportunity of witnessing the surpassing misery of those unhappy people ; for it was near noon, and they were either already engaged at their dinners, or coming home to them from the fields. And those brown, gaunt men, whom she passed, how did her heart ache to see the wretchedness written on their brows, to mark their slow and heavy steps, their downcast and desponding looks ! alas, she felt it was not so that the labourer would hasten home to a good meal and a happy family. But in more than one cottage, as she passed it, she perceived what kind of repast awaited those unfortunate men—a brown loaf, a dish of potatoes, at most a hard dumpling ; a morsel of bacon even appeared an unattainable luxury. Hard as was the condition of many of the peasants at Draycot, Sybil had not witnessed in that village such penury as this. But there had been the good Squire, partly at least to sustain the poor against the oppressive avarice of Luntley ; at Rodenhurst, on the contrary,

he had possessed a plenitude of power which he had employed in forestalling for his tenants that excessive misery which is now unhappily the lot of the great mass of the English peasantry, who, like those of Ireland, are reduced to a miserable diet of potatoes and water.

This state of things has, no doubt, in our days, been both accelerated and aggravated by the avarice and extravagance of the landholders, who have exacted rents which their lands could not justly bear, and by the still more pernicious system of large farming—a system by which that worthy and valuable class, the small farmers, have been turned into day labourers, depending upon the swollen monopolists, who have been adding farm to farm and field to field; aping the manners of the Squires of former times, keeping their carriages and hunters, and decorating their wives and daughters in brocaded satins and French lace.

Of this class of large farmers it may be said, that in their hardness and cruelty they far surpass the manufacturer and shopkeeper; and sorry are we to add, that the females of their families seldom form an exception, being, indeed, too often peculiarly distinguished for their insolence and inhumanity.

To the right-minded and humane Sybil the condition of Rodenhurst was a sight inexpressibly afflicting; and, as she still passed through the village, and gazed on its destitution, she felt how great would be the boon, did Providence reinstate her in her right, how great the happiness of making others happy—to stretch out a hand to these unfortunates, and say, “Oh, comfort ye, my people!”

Nor must it be supposed that the peasants of Rodenhurst had all become reckless under the oppressions which had ground them to the dust: no—that which most touched the heart of Sybil were the evident attempts of some of those poor cottagers to struggle with their woes, to be clean and neat, even amid starvation: with them the hollyhock and the sunflower were still kept free from weeds, the brick floor carefully swept, and the potatoes placed on a well-washed board.

Much, however, was Sybil surprised, amid this universal

poverty, when she came suddenly upon a flaring brick building, about the size of a moderately large room, and modelled after the architectural fashion of a barn, with "Bethesda Chapel" over the door in wooden letters, painted yellow, and about a foot long.

But Sybil ought not, in point of fact, to have been surprised at this: had she known the world better, she would also have known that the other evils of Rodenhurst could not fail of securing to it the bane of Sectarianism.

As she turned from the examination of the chapel, she came up to one of those neater cottages which had before attracted her attention: a middle-aged woman was standing at the door with an infant in her arms, and of her Sybil inquired what doctrine was preached at "Bethesda Chapel."

"So please you, lady," answered the woman, "I believe Mr. Jabez Ringletub is what they call a Baptist: but my husband and I do not go to his chapel."

"So much the worse for you, so much the worse, ye poor benighted, sinful creatures! Oh the worthy pious brother Ringletub, is he for ever in vain to tell the people of this wicked village how they will surely be damned! The Lord have pity on you, wretched woman, who have turned like one who could not hear from the exhortations of good brother Ringletub—the Lord have mercy on your sinful soul, for I have done with you."

The speaker of these words was a fat, red-faced, showily-dressed woman, about forty-five years of age, the widow of a tolerably wealthy farmer, in the neighbourhood of Rodenhurst, who had not only assisted the pious Mr. Ringletub to raise the brick room which had so much offended Sybil, but also provided for the preacher in her own dwelling-house an abundant supply of those creature comforts to which missionaries of that excellent gentleman's stamp so rarely raise an ascetic objection.

It was a custom also of the widow, two or three times in the course of the week, to visit the village, to sing psalms with the

admirers of the self-dubbed reverend, Jabez ; or thunder into the ears of all who neglected his instructions denunciations fierce enough to be worthy of Mr. Ringletub himself.

The air, however, of ineffable contempt and disgust which appeared in the countenance of Sybil, greatly offended the widow ; and after charitably recommending the poor woman to that mercy on the part of the Lord which she plainly owned she should herself deny, she flounced up the village, with an air, to scare some other poor wretches, amid their misery of this world, with the thoughts of eternal torments in the next.

"Then you go to church, my good woman," said Sybil, in a kindly tone, to the cottager's wife, when the Pharisaical widow had departed.

The simple but earnest manner of Sybil seemed to confuse the poor woman ; she blushed, and cast down her eyes. "No, my lady," she muttered ; "we do not go either to chapel or to church."

"Alas ! why not to church ? you have a child," said Sybil, taking the infant's hand ; "will you not pray for your child, if not for yourself ?"

"We did go to church in old times, my lady," answered the woman, with tears starting in her eyes, "but everything is altered at Rodenhurst now."

"Jane, Jane," said a man, advancing from the interior of the cottage, "why do not ye tell the lady why we do not go to church ? You see, my lady," he continued, turning to Sybil, "times are altered, as my wife says : who was there in all Rodenhurst who would have thought of staying away from church in our good old rector's time ? Why there was not a child in the village who did not love him as well as its own father ; he taught us to fear evil for its own sake : there was not a man or woman in the village who would not have shrunk from bad courses then. I loved the church in my young days, when our good rector preached of charity, and love, and kindness : we knew he had them all himself. But this rector of Sir Andrew's choosing, this parson Torrington—what does he care

for beyond hunting, and shooting, and getting his tithes? As to poor men's souls, oh, brother Ringletub may take care of them. Ask why we do not go to church! oh, lady, that shows you are a stranger at Rodenhurst. Well I remember, when our dear old rector laid in his last illness, what anxious hearts and wet eyes there were in the village; but, if Mr. Torrington goes with his present illness, there will be no weeping and wailing for him, I reckon."

As he spoke thus, the peasant leaned with a moody air against the doorway; and Sybil, glancing inside the cottage, perceived that he had risen from a table as poorly spread as any of those which she had noticed; then, turning to the man, she said, timidly, "I am indeed, as you suspect, a stranger in Rodenhurst; but I have heard much of this village, though I never visited it before; and I believe, when the Mandevilles were lords of the Manor, their tenants were prosperous and happy; how is it that Sir Andrew Luntley has wrought this great change?"

While Sybil was speaking, the man had gazed earnestly in her face, which he had not before regarded; and, without answering her inquiry, he said, with great eagerness, "Lady, it was said by Sir Andrew Luntley that his niece was dead; but there is the look of the old Mandevilles in your face—surely you are the daughter of our dear, dear Mr. Gerald."

This result of that extraordinary resemblance which Sybil bore to her father, and which had, on the morning of her arrival at Draycot, struck so forcibly on the guilty conscience of Luntley, was one which she had not contemplated, and was also little desirable, as she wished to perform her errand at Rodenhurst with all possible privacy and speed. On this recognition of her by the peasant, however, she acted with a promptitude and decision worthy of the pupil of Alice Morland. Stretching out her hand, which the poor man kissed with more respect than he would have shown to a queen, she entered the cottage, followed by his wife. "My good friend," then, said Sybil, "I am indeed, as you have rightly conjectured, the daughter of Mr. Gerald Mandeville; you even must know,"

she pursued, in a plaintive tone, "that Sir Andrew has denied to me my father's name; I yet hope to prove my right to its possession; but you, my friend, if you really loved my poor father, you will not let it be known that I am now at Rodenhurst."

"I let it be known, dear, dear young lady," said the cottager, sobbing like a child over Sybil's hand, which he still held—"I say anything to hurt the daughter of the generous, kind-hearted Mr. Gerald!"

"Do not think so ill of us, dear lady," interposed the cottager's wife; "I do not indeed remember your father's face as Darnel does, but I remember his kind heart, and how unlike he was to his proud sister, Deva; ah, Miss Mandeville, do not believe that Sir Andrew's stories have ever passed at Rodenhurst."

"Oh, dear young lady," said Darnel, "would that things were as they ought to be—that you had your own again! Sir Andrew is a hard, hard landlord."

"So, indeed, I have apprehended," answered Sybil; "but on this large estate of Rodenhurst I should have thought that even Sir Andrew must have employed the greater portion of the tenantry."

"Employed, my lady," answered Darnel; "oh, yes, there is employment enough! Men may work from morning till night, as we do; but our wages are so low, that, let us work as hard as we will, we must be content with bread and potatoes on week days, and think ourselves lucky if we can get a rasher of bacon on the Sundays: none of the cottager's wives with pigs and poultry nowadays. And then there is that rascal, Turner, who comes harassing us for the last farthing of the rent the moment it is due; and the miserly old Dingwell, up at the Manor, who is worse than Philip La Roche himself. Talk to a man about patience and religion, indeed, when he must work and work, and starve and starve; oh, I have no patience left!"

Sybil knew not what to say; fully indeed she determined that, did it please Providence to restore her property, Roden-

hurst should wear another aspect ; but she feared to raise in the breast of this poor man a hope which the future might not realize : she was fain to employ the indefinite terms of commonplace consolation. "And I, too, have my trials," she said ; "but we must hope—we must still hope."

"Ah, dear lady, that is what I say," remarked Darnel's wife ; "we must still hope ; but poor Hodge is getting quite worn out, and has often thought of leaving Rodenhurst, as so many others have done before. But Sir Andrew is a bad, bad man, and I cannot think that God will suffer him in the end to rob you of your own house and land."

"Yes, he is, indeed, a bad man," said Darnel : "would you believe it, Miss Mandeville, lawyer Turner came down last harvest with orders from his master to permit no gleaners in the fields ; and, though the barns were crammed with wheat, not an ear was there for the poor !"

"Is this possible even of Sir Andrew !" exclaimed Sybil, rather in astonishment, than addressing the peasants. "That usage which has prevailed in all ages and all lands, has it been defied by the barbarous avarice of one man—can the bounty of the God of harvests be so received ?"

"Ah, young lady, you may be well surprised," said Darnel ; "but, after this, you will not, I think, wonder when I tell you that of the old tenants of your family not a dozen remain on the estate : Sir Andrew so racks and harasses the farmers, that they in their turn are obliged to press hard upon the labourers, so some turn poachers, and others leave the village ; and I think I will soon be of that number myself ; I have been obliged already to send my big lads and lasses to seek their bread elsewhere ; and I and my wife have only stayed here because we were unwilling to leave the old place till the last minute. Oh, that we had the village as it used to be, with a merciful landlord and a good rector, and no lawyer Turner, or brother Ringletub ! but I will go away, for I can bear it no more."

"Not yet," said Sybil, rising to depart, "you will not go yet ; I must return to London in a day or two ; but promise me

that you will not leave Rodenhurst till you hear from me again."

More of hope, perhaps, than Sybil wished to awaken, shot across the poor cottager's heart while she spoke—"No, no, dear lady," he said; "do not fear me: I will not, indeed, be in a hurry to leave Rodenhurst now—I will hope we shall live to see it the Manor of the good Mandevilles again."

After bestowing upon these unfortunate people a small gratuity, Sybil returned to the inn; for she wished not to encounter any inquiries as to her projected visit to the Manor House.

CHAPTER XXIV

"The sun is in the heaven, and the proud day,
Attended with the pleasures of the world,
Is all too wanton, and too full of gauds
To give me audience: if the midnight bell
Did with his iron tongue and brazen mouth
Sound *one* unto the drowsy race of night,
I would into thy bosom pour my thoughts!
But, ah! I will not!"

KING JOHN.

It was with a heart made sad by the aspect of things at Rodenhurst, no less than by the peculiar and painful posture of her own affairs, that Sybil took her way towards the Manor House. By the landlady of the inn she had been informed that Abraham Dingwell, to whom she bore a letter from La Roche, was the only inhabitant of that ancient dwelling, the penurious habits of the man leading him to grasp the money which Sir Andrew allowed for the maintenance of other servants. Once in the vein for gossiping, too, this woman imparted to Sybil a wonderful and frightful story of ghosts and apparitions, which, like the innkeeper at Bewdley, she said had haunted the Manor House ever since the death of the Lady Luntley, which event did not take place at Rodenhurst, but when she was travelling with her

husband for the recovery of her health, which had declined soon after her marriage.

The Manor House, as before observed, was, taking the straight road, about a mile distant from the village: but the landlady directed Sybil to a bye path through the forest, which, though it somewhat lengthened the distance, was, she said, a more pleasant walk than the direct one.

This bye path perhaps Sybil would not have cared to pursue, had she not apprehended another recognition, such as that of the morning, on the part of some among the elder villagers, who, like Darnel, might remember her father. When Sybil took her way towards the forest, it was about four in the afternoon, and the sun, darting his beams with immense power, broke even through the leafy arches of the trees, and danced with a yellow, flickering radiance on the green turf and the tangled under-wood. There, too, where the thick boughs still shut out the sunbeams, floated that thin blue mist always observable where there are great masses of trees. That pleasant silence peculiar to the advancing day reigned in the woods, broken only by the humming of the bee, the single living creature that seemed astir. Pensively advancing, with her thoughts alike occupied by the conversation of the morning, and the probable results of her visit to the Manor House, Sybil mistook her path, and, after wandering some way, came suddenly upon the ruins of a Gothic chapel. Nothing could be more romantic than this building, completely secluded from all sights and sounds of the exterior world, the woods encircling like a belt the little verdant eminence on which it stood. Part of the roof had fallen in; and the door, which had dropped from its hinges long ago, lay on the ground, half covered with weeds and grass; but in the richly sculptured niche above the doorway was still the figure of the Saxon Saint Etheldreda, to whom the chapel had been dedicated. The style of the architecture was floridly Gothic, and the general condition of the building was such that it led Sybil to conjecture that, till within a comparatively late period, some care had been taken to prevent it from falling into total decay. Now, how-

ever, the pointed pinnacles, the flower wreaths so cunningly sculptured in the hard stone, were half hidden by the encroaching ivy, which, creeping through the broken roof, hung from it in dark, shining garlands, or, twisting insidiously round them, gave a grace to the crumbling columns which it aided to destroy. Trained as she had been by the antiquarian enthusiasm of Lawson into an affection and respect for all such graceful relics of the old time, Sybil could not turn without entering it from the beautiful ruin. And, as she stood in the mouldering fane, something of a mournful lustre it seemed to her there was even in the bright summer sunbeams, flickering through the twisted wreaths of the green ivy, dancing upon the thick moss, or intercepted by the shaft of a column, which broke the light, and made it weak and pale as it fell upon the shattered altar.

Advancing more closely to the altar, Sybil perceived the sunbeams darting behind it in a peculiar manner, which led her to suspect that they were lost in the open entrance of some vault.

On approaching the spot, she found that her conjecture was correct, and also that this chapel had been erected as the mausoleum of some member of her own race ; for behind the altar was an ancient monument of a recumbent warrior, with a Latin inscription on its base, purporting that on that spot " The noble knight, Sir Aymer de Mandeville, had escaped assassination through the powerful prayers of St. Etheldreda, to whose honour he had afterwards erected that chapel, choosing it for his own burial-place ; and finally petitioning all good Christians, of their charity, to offer up a prayer for the founder's soul."

On an examination, Sybil discovered that this tomb, from the general decay of the chapel, had sunk considerably ; and a huge flagstone at its foot, which had apparently covered the descent into the vault below, had slipped down, and revealed a yawning cavity, into which the sunbeam darted, till it was lost in the depth and pitchy darkness of the chasm. The slipping of this stone had laid bare the flight of narrow dew-stained steps which led to the vault ; but, as Sybil leaned over the gulf, she perceived a pale, faint ray glimmering across the blackness below, which

she imagined must proceed from some grating in the vault itself. The steps appeared firm ; and an impulse of curiosity, for which she did not pause to account, induced her to descend them. The light which stole through the grating was exceedingly weak, and it was not till Sybil's eye had become in some measure accustomed to the obscurity, that she distinctly perceived the objects around her. She then found that she was in a vault, which, from its space, must have occupied a large portion of the ground beneath the chapel, and lighted by a grating placed high in the wall ; the air issuing through this grating, and the wide cavity occasioned by the falling away of the stone which had covered the staircase, was wholly free from the unpleasant and unwholesome odour common to subterraneous places. In the centre of this vault was a bier, or tomb of stone, supporting an immense coffin of the same material, which Sybil concluded to be the repository of the remains of the knight whose effigy she had seen in the chapel ; three stone steps on either side led to the summit of this bier, and from the great size of the coffin it seemed likely that it was but the case of another, framed from some less weighty and lasting material. On ascending the steps, however, in order to examine it, Sybil was greatly surprised, and somewhat shocked, to see that the lid had evidently been removed some years before ; for not only was it a little apart from the coffin at the upper end, but there was the mark of the chisel at intervals, for its whole length, and small fragments of stone were scattered on the bier below it. On her first sight of the displaced coffin lid, the prompt imagination of Sybil suggested to her the act of its removal in connexion with some frightful deed ; but a minute's reflection showed that it was probably the work of some antiquarian as harmless as herself, and, with a smile at her credulity, she descended the steps. The skirt of her dress, however, then caught on them, and a clanking sound ensued, as though some large piece of metal had struck against them ; Sybil, startled by the noise, looked anxiously for its cause, and, as her eye was now used to the obscurity, she saw at a few paces distant a small box, or casket, which her gown had swept off the steps. On picking

it up, she found that the dim light would not permit her to discover its form or contents, but it was made of metal; and, with a sudden thought, a wild hope, Sybil hastened up the staircase of the vault, into the clearer light of the chapel above. Before she ventured to examine her prize, she looked carefully from the door of the chapel, to ascertain that no one was near; then, on a close inspection, she found it to be a small and curiously wrought casket, which, though much tarnished, was evidently framed of silver. The hands of Sybil now trembled with agitation—was she deceived? A mist seemed to gather before her eyes, but it passed away; and as she now, with a determined coolness, examined the casket, in the full broad glare of the sunlight, she saw the arms of Mandeville, and the initials G. M. upon the lid.

A crowd of horrible thoughts rushed over Sybil's mind, the confirmation of the fear which had haunted her like a spectre since the days of her childhood. She grew very faint, and was compelled to sit down on the turf before the chapel. In a few minutes that faintness passed away, and then she endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts, and perceived that, even if her suspicions were correct, it was still incumbent on her to visit the Manor House, instead of returning immediately to London, as, in the first moments of her surprise and agitation, she partly purposed. Sybil thought she could not be deceived—just such a silver casket as this was the one which had contained the authenticated copy of the certificate of her parents' marriage, and which by a mischance had been taken by her father to Scotland, in that fatal journey from which he never returned. Yet, if this were really that identical casket which she had heard Alice describe so many times, then Gerald Mandeville had not been among the drowned passengers of the "Dolphin." Fearful even of pursuing her own strong suspicions while so much remained to be done, Sybil turned her endeavours to open the casket; it required, however, a stronger hand than hers, to force the spring; the lengthening shadows, too, warned her of the declining day; and with an anxious heart concealing the casket in a hand basket

which she had brought with her from the inn, she sought to retrace her way to the Manor House. For some time she trod the deep forest paths in considerable perplexity ; but, a break in the trees revealing a wing of the old mansion, with the sun streaming over it in a flood of crimson light, Sybil, keeping in that direction, soon found herself at the park gates. Near to those gates stood the church—a plain, solemn-looking, and ancient edifice ; the parsonage house, a building of much later date, had about it an air of comfort and even of luxury, which accorded well with the account which Sybil had in the morning received of the present incumbent.

Turning from the rector's dwelling to the park, it was at once evident that the Lord of the Manor was not resident at Rodenhurst ; for the lodge was unoccupied, its windows beaten in, and the park gates swinging wide open. Tears rose into the eyes of Sybil, as she first set her foot upon the broad gravel path which swept towards the Manor House—that path along which the carriage had rolled which bore her an infant to Rodenhurst, nineteen years before—that path which the father whom she never knew had so often trod. All the events, too, of Emma Mandeville's sad and single visit to that place now thronged thick upon her daughter's mind, each fearful apprehension gaining truthfulness from her speculations respecting the mysterious casket, so strangely concealed within the ancient tomb.

There was a wildness and romantic beauty in the park at Rodenhurst, presenting as it did all the characteristics of the forest scenery beyond its precincts, but with nature just so far restrained by the hand of art, that she won therefrom a new grace. Here was a gentle sloping dell, with groups of the soft-eyed deer nestling among its tufts of feathery fern ; there swelled a hill crowned with dark woods, now gently murmuring, as the rising evening breeze passed among their boughs ; while anon the trees broke away on all sides, and the wide extended prospect melted into the far shades of the forest.

Still, as Sybil advanced towards the Manor House, she

marked fresh symptoms of its long desertion ; grass had grown upon the broad and winding gravel path which led immediately to the mansion ; a pavilion on the banks of a large artificial lake had fallen into decay ; a pleasure boat, moored to its side, was rotting with time ; and a pair of aged swans, once the tame tenants of the lake, scared by the sound of Sybil's foot, swam hastily away towards the huge patches of water lilies which overspread its centre.

Sybil sighed—the freshness and loveliness of the season, the magnificent horse chestnut trees, with their stems of pink flower, the white wreaths of the hawthorn, the humming of the honey bee, the voice of the birds now awakening for their evening carol, the young green even of the trees—all that spoke of nature's revival seemed to add to Rodenhurst's desolation ; how sad a contrast, indeed, did it present to the silent courts, the closed windows of that paternal dwelling which now burst full upon her view !

A rare old mansion was the Manor House at Rodenhurst, built from age to age ; with its centre fantastic in its Gothic decorations, its fretwork and its tall turrets, and with wings conspicuous for the heavy, ponderous magnificence of Elizabethan architecture ; with innumerable narrow casements, and broad terraces stretching beneath them. Who shall say how the heart of the poor and forlorn Sybil beat, as she stood before the portal of her ancient home ? But the gates, with their frowning archway, were closed ; grass had grown up against them ; they had not been opened since Sir Andrew and his wife left the Manor. Sybil looked for some more obscure entrance ; and, after traversing the exterior of the courtyard wall for some way, she came to a lowbrowed door, with the handle of a bell pendent beside it ; and, as she waited anxiously to see what kind of person would answer its summons, she thought its deep tones had a dismal sound echoing through those empty courts.

Sybil had not attended long, when she heard an approaching step ; some heavy bolts were withdrawn, the door opened, and a thin, querulous-looking old man inquired peevishly what she

wanted. On her delivering to him the letter from La Roche, he started; but, after reading it with great attention, his manner altered, and with an air of respect he bade her enter, and ushered her through a grass-grown court into the long-deserted halls of the Manor House.

CHAPTER XXV

“ Oh synge untoe my roundelaie,
Oh droppe the brinie teare wythe mee ;
Daunce ne moe atte hallie daie,
Lycke a reyninge ryver bee.

“ Wyth mie hondes I'll dent the brieres,
Round his hallie corse to gre ;
Ouphante fairies, lyghte your fyres,
Here mie boddie still schall bee.

“ Come wyth acorn-cuppe, and thorne,
Drayne my harty's blodde awaie ;
Lyfe and all its goods I scorne,
Daunce bie nyght, and feast bie daie.”

CHATTERTON.

THE peerless lustre of the May moon lighted up the silent courts of Rodenhurst, tinting with something of a ghostly hue the cold grey stone of which the most ancient portion of the mansion was composed, and throwing into stronger contrast its huge wings of old red brick; while the formal groups of statues which decorated the terraces, bathed in the white radiance, seemed to win from it a more fearful rigidity of aspect; the park beyond sleeping in most peaceful beauty in the clear moon-beams.

It was long since the halls of Rodenhurst had sheltered the head of the innocent and young; it was long since the sigh of a pure heart had been heard within them. The oppressor had fully triumphed there, and something of horror did Sybil's recollec-

tion of that triumph add to the gloom which surrounded her. The girl sat in a large old apartment, wainscoted with oak ; so chill was the room even on that warm evening, that Dingwell had kindled a fire on the spacious hearth. Sybil was alone : a lamp and an open letter were on the table before her—the letter to herself, which La Roche had forbidden her to read till she arrived at the Manor House. She read it yet again, and her hand trembled as she held it to the lamp ; it contained some fearful intimations.

“Not to be Lord of the Manor, Sybil,” said that letter, “would I again visit Rodenhurst ; not for its value thrice told would Sir Andrew, the firm Sir Andrew, pass a night beneath its roof. But I know, Sybil, what he does not know, that the authenticated copy of the certificate of your mother’s marriage is somewhere concealed there ; Sir Andrew supposes that copy to be destroyed ; I would have sought it myself, Sybil, but I could not, I could not ; oh, the task, when I did attempt it ! but you, Sybil—you are what the world calls innocent : I do think that innocence has a certain strength ; it relies on itself, and you have your right also to support you ; oh, Sybil, be firm : think of your father’s uncertain fate, think of your mother’s blighted fame : let the world see, now, if filial duty be a farce or not. But, courage, Sybil ; courage, oh, you will need it all ! Sir Andrew destroyed the original register, of which, in my presence, he robbed the curate, Wilson. I cannot tell you exactly where the authenticated copy is concealed ; but seek, as I told you, the West Gallery ; press the spring which I described to you opposite the painted window ; the keys which I gave you will open the chambers beyond, and in the last of the range, there, Sybil, you will discover papers which will tell where you may find the certificate : I ought to have secured those papers the last time I was in that chamber, but I thought then I should go mad—I thought only of escaping from it. And you, even, Sybil, innocent though you may be, courage, courage ; utter a prayer before you uncloset its door, and then no puerile weakness, none—thoughts only of your parents then.”

Such was the substance of that letter, which concluded with many injunctions to Sybil to beware how she suffered the secrets of the Manor House to escape her own keeping, and especially enjoining her not to commence her awful search till the time when she might suppose that Dingwell had betaken himself to rest.

Again and again had Sybil read that letter, and each time shuddered as she read: the horror which its vague hints aroused was, perhaps, the more oppressive, that they were so vague.

All was still around her—a frightful stillness, which made her own breath an appalling sound.

She looked up from the letter: a deep bay window was directly opposite the table at which she sat; beneath it was a broad stone terrace, and beyond stretched the park, in a tranquillity which was even painful to her, from its contrast to her excited feelings; not a shadow was seen to cross that moonlight space, but around her, within the chamber which she occupied, seemed to flit strange and lowering forms.

Suddenly the dead stillness was broken—the iron tongue of the old church clock sent a solemn sound upon the passing breeze. The letter dropped from Sybil's hand; each stroke appeared to vibrate upon her heart; the hour of eleven was told out, and scarcely had the echoes of the church clock died upon the air, when they were answered by that of the Manor House.

There would have been no need for the injunction of La Roche; without that, Sybil would have flung herself upon her knees, and prayed as she did, with a frantic terror.

Her prayer was brief as it was earnest: she felt that the time had now arrived; and the last deep, heavy stroke which told the hour, was yet murmuring through the empty chambers of Rodenhurst, when, rising, with a countenance calm, though very pale, she took the lamp from the table, and proceeded softly towards the West Gallery.

There is something peculiarly awful in the consciousness that we alone are awake and moving through a large building in the dead hours of the night. The creaking of a distant door, the

sighing of the wind, the sound even of our own footsteps, the dim obscurity stretching beyond that narrow space which a single taper may illumine, have all a power to waken an unutterable and nameless horror.

Such a horror pressed heavily upon Sybil Mandeville, as, fearful of losing herself in the intricacies of that vast and irregular building, she forced herself to a painfully minute observance of those instructions which La Roche had given her, while passing up the great staircase of the main body of the Manor House, from thence, in order to reach the West Gallery, holding her course through long suites of apartments, where the tall mirrors mournfully reflected her timid, shrinking figure, and the rich furniture was decaying with the accumulated dust and damps of eighteen years.

At the end of such a stately range of rooms Sybil had first occasion to use the keys given to her by La Roche, and entered a spacious apartment, hung with black, with a bier in the centre, surmounted by a canopy, adorned with plumes of black feathers: opposite to this bier was a large painted window. The rapid pulsations of the girl's heart increased as she crossed that chamber, for she knew it to be the one in which the corpse of her grandfather had lain previous to his interment, the same in which her poor mother had first met the cruel Deva. La Roche had said that her room still remained in the same state as at the period of Mr. Mandeville's death; and that passing through the antechamber where Alice Morland had been left waiting on that fearful night, she would then find herself in the apartment in which Deva had given audience to her mother, the doors of which directly communicated with the West Gallery.

Once only did Sybil venture to turn her head towards the bier, over which the bright moonlight, and the gorgeous glass, threw the same rich, many-coloured stain which Alice Morland had noticed when it supported the coffin of the dead lord of the Manor. With a fleet foot Sybil passed through that room, for she felt that all was lost, did she yield for one moment to the impulse of fear; but, pausing for breath in the antechamber, her

eyes fell, at first unconsciously, upon the huge mirror in which Alice had seen, or fancied that she saw, the form and features of Gerald Mandeville. As this recollection rushed upon the mind of Sybil, her eyes became fixed in an agony of superstitious terror upon the mirror, as though she too expected to see there her father's face ; but her own pale, affrighted countenance was alone reflected on its polished surface, and, with a deep sigh, Sybil passed into the adjoining chamber. There she did not permit herself to pause : in that room the knowledge of her wrongs had fallen on the ill-fated Emma with a power sufficient to deprive her of reason, but her daughter now sought the means of redressing those wrongs ; it was no time to weaken her own mind, by lingering to weep over the scene where they were wrought.

The apartment was magnificently furnished, for it had been the principal sitting room of the haughty Deva ; Sybil, however, lingered not to examine its rare Indian cabinets, or hangings of crimson velvet looped with gold ; with a hasty step, she passed on to a pair of folding doors—these doors opened on the West Gallery.

Sybil now paused, and trembled, and drew her breath heavily ; the painted window—that magnificent window which Alice Morland had observed so many years before—was at the end of this gallery, and a rich line of rubied light fell in a slanting direction on the wall opposite to which Sybil stood : on the oaken panels, too, of this gallery, hung the portraits of the Mandevilles, her ancestors of many hundred years. The girl, however, paused not to examine the countenances of these grim worthies ; she did not even seek among them those of her immediate progenitors ; her eyes were fixed, fascinated, as it were, to the panel which caught from the window that glow of crimson light.

Was it here she was to kneel and pray ? No—La Roche had spoken of a range of rooms, and the chamber to which he alluded in such evident horror was the last.

Summoning all her courage, Sybil advanced towards the panel—it had a curious tracery of flowers : carefully, according to the instructions of La Roche, she pressed the centre of a rose which

was prominent in that rare oak carving; a sharp sound from the sudden action of a spring ensued; the panel flew backwards, and Sybil stepped into a narrow stone passage, built evidently in the walls of the mansion. This passage was long and winding; so wearying, indeed, was its length, as to convince Sybil that it must encircle, in its labyrinthine extent, the whole of that wing of the mansion in which the West Gallery was situated, even winding round some of those rooms through which she had lately passed. At length, however, Sybil arrived at the end of what she had thought the almost interminable passage, and a low-browed oaken door opposed her further progress: this door was locked, but it yielded to one of the keys which she had received from La Roche. There was nothing remarkable in the apartment which Sybil entered through that door, except in so far that it evidently belonged to the most ancient portion of the Manor House, and had apparently been disused for some generations, since the tapestry which hung upon the walls was dropping to pieces with age, and the furniture, which was negligently piled in one corner of the room, in a like condition.

From this apartment opened another, equally spacious, empty, and desolate; here was a large Gothic window, towards which Sybil stepped eagerly, in expectation that it overlooked the park; but, to her disappointment, she found the view confined to a narrow grass-grown court, closed in by another portion of the building. At one end of this apartment was a pair of massive folding doors; but none of the keys which Sybil had received from La Roche would fit the locks, and she concluded that these doors opened upon the more modern and frequented parts of the mansion. At a remote corner of this room was another door; it yielded readily to one of the keys which Sybil held, but she paused ere she entered it, for La Roche had told her there were three apartments on that range, and this was the last—that awful chamber which he, the man of hardihood and crime, feared to enter. Dismal echoes had Sybil's footsteps returned through those desolate rooms, and on their bare oak floorings; a mournful echo even had the opening of the doors sent through

the silent edifice; but here the door turned back silently—the foot of Sybil fell upon the floor of the apartment without a sound.

One terror-stricken, hurried glance did she cast through that apartment: it was of no great extent, with one narrow window; and Sybil, who had expected some sight inexpressibly appalling, felt relieved, when, on glancing round it, she perceived in it nothing remarkable, save the funereal character of its furniture. The walls were hung, the floor carpeted with black cloth; two chairs which were there, a small table, and even a cabinet, had the same sable coverings. On a closer inspection, too, Sybil perceived drawn across one side of the room a long black curtain; and that, in strange contradiction to the gloomy colour of their hangings, the walls were lined with pictures. Involuntarily Sybil stepped forwards, and held up her lamp to examine the largest of these pictures. It was a whole-length figure of a young man, of five or six and twenty years of age; the features had in them, perhaps, too feminine a beauty, they were so very delicate and finely formed. But, despite the excellent purity of its outline, there was in that portrait an awful, superhuman expression, which made Sybil shudder as she gazed. The pallor of the grave was on the lip and cheek, the discolouring of convulsion about the mouth, though the dark eyes, full of a strange life, seemed to pour into her soul a mysterious meaning, as she looked upon them. Shroud-like, too, this figure had a long white garment rolled about it from the shoulder to the foot, while the gloomy background of the picture seemed even to shadow out the apartment in which Sybil stood.

With an indefinable horror curdling at her heart, the girl turned from this picture to the next; it was considerably smaller; there an old man was extended on a couch, with a beautiful woman leaning over him, while, with a look of unutterable grief and entreaty, knelt before him a youth, whose features were the same with those of the larger portrait. The other pictures were evidently scenes from the life of the same individual; but two of them more particularly attracted the notice of Sybil: in

the first the young man leaned, with a desponding air, upon the park gates of Rodenhurst, shut against him ; but the last seemed like the chapel vault which Sybil had visited that day ; and there were two men with the hero of the pictures, and one struck a dagger to his heart.

Sybil trembled, and nearly dropped the lamp ; for the assassin had the face of Sir Andrew Luntley, as surely as that the features of the murdered youth were like her own !

* * * * *

A horrible mystery was indeed connected with that chamber ; but who had painted the terrific pictures ? The cabinet, with its black drapery, attracted the eyes of Sybil, who, gasping with horror, had flung herself upon a chair ; the papers which La Roche had mentioned, doubtless they were there : made calm even by the high excitement to which her nerves were wrought, she unlocked the cabinet. Within was a miniature of Sir Andrew, taken apparently at some early period of his life, when his handsome features were not marred by the hard, sarcastic look which had so long become habitual to them. The other contents of the cabinet were a roll of papers ; and a scourge, composed of five slender steel chains, about a foot and a half long.

Sybil shuddered, as she took up this awful instrument of penance : it was stained, spotted thick with rust, even to the handle.

Who was the wretched, guilty being, whose conscience had exacted such a penalty ?

Sybil unrolled the MS. : it was written in a female hand, and the first words made her tremble ; there was yet a mystery of that terrible chamber undeveloped, and, with a frenzied hand, Sybil withdrew the black curtain. There, standing upon tressels, in an arched recess, was a leaden coffin ; the age or rank of the occupant was not inscribed upon the lid ; it bore only one word—DEVA.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“ Let him come on,
With all his wrongs and injuries about him,
Armed with his cutthroat practices to guard him :
The right which I bring with me shall defend me,
And punish his extortion !”

NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS.

FOUR days had passed since the departure of Sybil Mandeville for the deserted Manor—four days, which, in their rapid flight, were for her friends a symbol of the ever-changeful current of human life—that current which runs now turbid, and anon so bright. There was grief for the uncertain fate of Sybil, of whom they knew not but that she had fallen into some snare devised by Luntley, for La Roche had forbidden her to name whither she had gone ; there was added trouble for themselves, for the toils of Sir Andrew were fast closing round the true-hearted Draycots ; while, though, thanks to the generous obstinacy with which Croxall refused to plead against his old friend, a stumbling-block was thrown in the way of the Baronet where Father Lawson was concerned, it seemed sufficiently probable that his influence would for some time detain the Benedictine in a vexatious imprisonment. Such was the sorrow which had stretched Lady Anne on a bed of sickness, and given yet a graver air to Lord Aumerle, while the spirit of the stout old Squire was almost crushed ; his lawsuits with Luntley pressed hard on his pecuniary resources, and, what was far worse, his legal advisers had decided that the condition of Harry on his approaching trial would be most precarious, unless some evidence could be obtained which would destroy the character, not only of Luntley, but of Camille Le Moine, the French jeweller, who pretended to hold proofs of traitorous correspondence on the part of young Draycot. But, amid all this grief, amid all these fears, there was a ray across the gloom, when, to the de-

light and astonishment of his family and friends, on the fifth morning after Sybil's departure Lord Fitzwarine arrived in London. The incertitude which Alice Morland and her other friends were in, respecting Sybil, ceased in a great measure with the arrival of Fitzwarine, who justly surmised that she had been prevailed upon by La Roche to visit Rodenhurst, whither that man had proposed to Lord Fitzwarine that she should proceed. The idea, however, that Sybil, alone and unprotected, had undertaken such a journey—a journey which might possibly expose her to some mortal harm at the hands of Luntley—was sufficiently distressing to Fitzwarine; and, scarce resting for refreshment, he resolved himself at once to set out for Rodenhurst.

Some few preparations, however, were necessary for this new journey; and, while they were being made, Fitzwarine related his perilous adventures among the coiners, stating, in conclusion, that he had been unavoidably detained by the legal authorities at Lichfield after his liberation; and that, to his great regret, he had been compelled to leave poor Farmer Ashley a prisoner in that town, to abide the result of Sir Andrew's proceedings.

Mr. Curzon was the only one of the family circle of Lord Aumerle who was not present at these explanations; but at an hour previous to the arrival of Fitzwarine at his father's house, the Nonjuror had proceeded to Newgate-street, to see the poor sick stranger whom he had, on the day of Sybil's departure, committed to the care of the charitable widow; but whom, in the distress and anxiety occasioned by the girl's absence, he had not been before able to visit, though the Widow Hammond had brought from him more than one message.

This stranger, it may be remembered, was the curate, Wilson.

Scarcely were the explanations of Lord Fitzwarine concluded, when the party were surprised by a visit from the Prince of Wales himself, who, full of sympathy and kindness, had come to inquire whether Lord Aumerle had yet obtained news of his

son, and to assure Mr. Draycot that, whatever might be the result of Harry's trial, he might still count upon his good offices; for that the public opinion, which was running strong against Sir Andrew, was also his own—nor could he believe that the villany of that man would ultimately escape detection.

Most hearty were the congratulations of the kind-hearted Prince, when he found that Lord Fitzwarine was safe and well; and, listening attentively to the account of the young man's adventures among the coiners, he bade Mr. Draycot take courage, and observe how a clue to unravel the frauds of the Baronet might yet be obtained by Miss Mandeville, before the trial of Harry Draycot.

Even while the Prince spoke, the door of the apartment gently opened, and a figure clad in white glided into it. It was Lady Anne, who, hearing from an attendant that the Prince was in the house, had risen from her bed, ill as she was, hoping to interest him more warmly in her lover's cause. The fears of the young girl were stronger than her hopes; she had an awful idea of the character of Sir Andrew—of his power to accomplish his will. "Ah, your Royal Highness," she cried, clasping for support the hand which the Prince had extended towards her, "shall we encourage a hope for Mr. Draycot while Miss Mandeville is absent? Alas! our poor Sybil, may she not have fallen into some snare which the villany of Sir Andrew has prepared?"

"That is indeed what I fear," said Lord Fitzwarine; "but bear up, dearest Anne—I will depart for Rodenhurst within an hour."

"And in three days will be Harry's trial," said Lady Anne, with a convulsive shudder; for she doubted even the efficiency of the aid of the benevolent Prince, should Luntley be able to make out his malignant charge.

There was a contagion in her fear that infected Mr. Draycot; and, sinking into a chair, forgetful of the presence of the Prince, he buried his face in his hands, and groaned aloud. It was a touching sight to behold that stalwart, but grey-headed man,

suffering under such extreme grief. Miss Draycot, who was present, was at her brother's side in a moment ; and, tenderly removing his hands from his face, " Harry, Harry," she said, in a pathetic tone, " take courage—be yourself !"

It was a painful moment to the Prince, for he saw into all the harrowing apprehensions of those whom he sought so earnestly to befriend : he took Mr. Draycot's hand—" My good Sir," he exclaimed, " take heart ; you cannot doubt my power at least to delay the effects of this villain's malice."

The old man looked up with an earnest air, and struggled to command his voice ; but all the evil which Luntley had wrought—the mortification, the danger, the accumulated emotions of the last few weeks—seemed to press upon him at that moment ; and, after a repeated and vain effort at articulation, he burst into tears, exclaiming in a bitter accent, " Oh, your Royal Highness, I take Heaven to witness that the one thought of my life has been to make others happy—and what, oh, what is my reward ?"

Such reply as the Prince might have made to this passionate complaint was prevented by an hysterical cry, a scream without, which, being in the voice of the usually dauntless Alice Morland, filled Miss Draycot with alarm. She was proceeding to ascertain the cause of that cry, when the door was thrown open, and Alice entered—in an agitation which left no time for form—leading, or rather dragging, Sybil Mandeville by the hand, and followed by Mr. Curzon, whose air, if less disturbed, was no less earnest than her own.

As for Sybil, she looked and moved like one in a dream ; her nerves, which she had braced like steel, had not failed her when the horrible mysteries of Rodenhurst stood first revealed ; they had borne her even through the whirlwind of frightful thought which had passed across her brain during her solitary return to London. But, with the most stringent necessity for exertion, her powers also passed away. Placing a small roll of papers and a silver casket on the table before the Prince, she sank at his feet ; her lips moved, but no sound proceeded from them ;

her nerves were subjected to a dangerous reaction, and she fell back in a swoon ; while Alice, the firm Alice—she who had shown no weakness in her sorrow—was quite subdued in her excess of joy ; mixing wild gratulations with hysterical sobs, while she clasped the senseless form of her adopted daughter to her heart.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“And now the heavy wrath of God
Upon the uncle fell ;
Yea, fearful fiends did haunt his house ;
His conscience felt a hell.

“His ships were lost, his goods consumed,
His lands were barren made ;
His cattle died within the field,
And nothing with him stayed.”

CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.

IN a dusky office, in the heart of London—in Change-alley itself—sat Sir Andrew Luntley, in eager conversation ; he was so eager, indeed, that something of his customary caution was abated, and he noticed not a certain coldness in the manner of his companion.

This last was a middle-sized and somewhat spare man, with black eyes, keen and piercing as those of the hawk, an olive complexion, and the strong, aquiline features which betoken a Jewish descent. The attire of this person was not only scrupulously neat, but expensive : his brown suit was richly laced, his cravat was from the looms of Flanders, and in his hand he held a gold snuff-box, on the lid of which his fingers tapped restlessly while Sir Andrew spoke.

This person was Jacob Henriquez, the great money jobber and loan contractor of the day.

Sir Andrew, having stated the object of his visit, paused for a reply. Henriquez meditated, rapped his box, took a long pinch

of snuff, and then, looking full in Luntley's face, said—"I am to understand then, Sir Andrew, that this young man, this Richard Frankley, is, by your advice, coming to consult me as to the disposal of his money."

"Just so, just so, Henriquez," answered the Baronet; "I could not forget an old friend upon such an occasion. Among the vile tricks which fortune so frequently plays upon us men of the city, it is not often that she throws in our way the compensation of such a fool as this Herefordshire squire. My dear Henriquez, you could not think I should offer such a golden opportunity to anybody but yourself."

Henriquez bowed slightly to the last observation; then, referring to the preceding one, he remarked—"Yes, fortune does indeed play us sad tricks. I have been grieved, Sir Andrew, for the late loss of your fine Indiaman, the 'Royal William;' I suppose there is no chance that she will be heard of again."

A slight spasm passed over the face of Luntley at these words, so very slight and brief, that an observer less acute than Henriquez would have failed to detect beneath it the bitter pang which shot across his soul at this allusion to a loss which, when first ascertained, had well nigh driven him frantic; for from avarice he had failed to insure the ship, and her rich lading was irretrievably lost. "Yes," said Sir Andrew, "the loss of the 'Royal William' is indeed a calamity; but," he continued, with an attempt at a smile, "I must not complain, Henriquez—these mischances affect me less than other mercantile men; I have my landed property to fall back upon."

"True," answered Henriquez; "and yet land may be subject to mishaps—for crops may be bad, and farmers fail to pay."

"Just so, just so," replied Luntley; "all property is uncertain; and therefore is it the part of wise men to avail themselves of such a chance as this Frankley will now furnish for us. Hark you, Henriquez, he will place confidence, implicit confidence, in you; and he has fifty thousand pounds in gold, hard gold."

While Luntley spoke thus, there was a tone of high exulta-

tion in his voice, and a brightness in his deep grey eye, which contrasted somewhat remarkably with the cold look and quiet tone with which Henriquez put the simple question, "And what then?"

"What then?" retorted Sir Andrew, with some asperity, and with a sneer—"Do I not say that this stupid boy will entirely submit himself to you? How easy, then, will it be to lead him to buy before a fall, and to sell before a rise!"

As Sir Andrew again paused after these words, Henriquez took another long pinch of snuff, and then looked his companion hard in the face, but returned no answer.

"Well, well," said the latter, impatiently.

"Well," returned Henriquez drily; "I do not understand you, Andrew."

"You do not understand me!" cried the Baronet, in a yet more impetuous tone—"you do not understand me! How comes it, Henriquez, that you are suddenly so dull? who is there so well acquainted with the stocks—who is there could so soon part this fool and his money as yourself? You do not understand me! oh, recollect, the first of April is past."

"Softly, softly, good Sir Andrew," replied the Israelite. "I said I did not understand you, because, as far as my comprehension of your proposal went, it implied no compliment to my honesty, therefore I supposed that I must have misunderstood you."

Upon this remark, Sir Andrew opened his eyes very wide, and gazed in a kind of stupefaction upon the Jew; then, leaning against a desk, he burst into a long and loud fit of laughter. Henriquez waited very patiently till this mood of merriment was past.

"Since when," the Baronet then exclaimed, with a savage sneer—"since when, Mr. Henriquez, have such nice morals become the mode among your nation? Oh, when the Jew preaches honesty, Satan may well find fault with sin."

"Sir Andrew Luntley," said Henriquez, rising, and speaking in a sharper tone than he had yet used—for he was nettled by

the Baronet's sarcasms—"Sir Andrew Luntley, my nation must answer for its own sins, and so must your's, Sir, so must your's! I am a money dealer, Sir, but I am not a swindler, I am not a thief. If this foolish young man will risk his money in the stocks, well and good; he must take his chance; I shall advise him to such a course as I should pursue myself. But coolly to plot for the transfer of his fortune to my own pockets—it is out of the question, Sir; I should expect nothing but evil to myself, if I could conduct business in such a mode.

Sir Andrew Luntley had by this time subdued the outbreak of his mirth, though a sardonic sneer more than once crossed his lip while Henriquez spoke; he too had risen, and, as he took his hat to depart, he said, "Come, let us understand each other, Henriquez; I had purposed a division; but what extraordinary advantage do you contemplate in your own behalf?"

"I contemplate no extraordinary advantage," answered the Jew; "Sir Andrew, do me the justice to believe I may be an honest man."

"I thought you had been a wise one," observed Luntley.

"I do not think what I have said to-day should induce you to alter that opinion," answered Henriquez.

"Am I really to understand, then, that you will not meddle with this business?" inquired Sir Andrew.

"Not in the manner which you have proposed, most certainly," replied Henriquez.

"Sir, I pity you!" remarked Luntley, quitting the office, with an air of profound contempt.

As in the instance when he had discovered in Dr. Hoadley an indisposition to back his outrageous villanies, so also did the depraved mind of Sir Andrew refuse to admit a belief in the honesty of Henriquez. Execrations, "not loud, but deep," burst from his lips, as, throwing himself into his carriage, he bade his coachman drive to the residence of the Bishop at Westminster, for he had received a summons from that prelate on the previous evening. "The lying, canting, hypocrite," he muttered, "the impudent extortioner, to grudge me a share

of the feathers, when I myself place the pigeon in his hands : well, well, Mr. Henriquez, we shall see ! I, who could have sent Squire Frankley to you, may also keep him away. But at this time, at this time, Henriquez might have been so useful : the loss of that ship, and the failing of my West India returns—all, all together—must I lose my wealth, my wealth ?” and, as that thought arose, the most bitter which could afflict him, Sir Andrew leaned back in his carriage, and groaned in agony of heart. He locked his hands together, in a spasm of grief and apprehension—he, that hard man, who had driven others to ruin, to starvation, to suicide—who had so many times looked upon the orphan’s tears, and heard the widow’s cry unmoved—he could feel for *himself* ! Dismal fancies, too, came crowding on his mind : he who had never known aught but success, who had been accustomed to see gold flowing into his coffers from year to year, in a continued tide, was appalled by the severe losses which he had of late encountered ; it seemed to him that they must be the signal of some other calamity yet more terrible—that his good fortune was deserting him ; he who could not believe in virtue, could believe in fate ! While his carriage rolled through the city, Sir Andrew sat, with his head resting on his hand, gazing moodily on vacancy ; suddenly he started, grew pale, shivered, and closed his eyes, leaning back, as if seized with some mortal illness. After the lapse of a few minutes, he unclosed his eyes, glanced hurriedly at his side, and at the opposite and vacant seat of his carriage ; then, drawing a long breath, he wiped away with his handkerchief the cold dews which had broken on his brow, while he exclaimed, in a low, moaning voice—“ Again ! again ! that frightful, sickly fancy, the curse of her existence, at which I mocked for years—must that be mine, too, must that be mine ? It is but a miserable delusion, provoked by too much thought ; but action, action, now to drive away such morbid dreams. Action, indeed,” he continued, with a mocking smile, as his carriage drew up to the door of the Bishop’s residence.

On being ushered into the presence of Dr. Hoadley, Sir Andrew was somewhat surprised to find Archdeacon Blackburne

in close conference with the prelate; for he knew that the latter dignitary had purposed leaving London that very morning. He slightly expressed this surprise, whereupon Blackburne replied, with even yet more of cutting coldness than was usual to him, "Truly, Sir Andrew, it is on your account that I am still in London: his lordship sent late last night to beg that I would be a witness of his interview with you this morning."

The anxious mind of Sir Andrew was prepared to anticipate evil, and it scarce required the extreme severity of Blackburne's manner to convince him that it was for no purpose of courtesy or friendship towards himself that Hoadley had summoned the Archdeacon to this meeting. Both dignitaries had risen on his entrance, but the Bishop had not requested him to take a seat; and now, turning towards him with a sternness which no man knew better how to assume, he said, "I sent for my friend Blackburne, Sir Andrew Luntley, because I knew him to be strongly prejudiced in your favour, and therefore it was important that he should immediately learn what kind of man he had graced with his friendship. Sir Andrew, the curate, Wilson, visited me last night."

The Baronet had thought himself nerved for any announcement; and, knowing as he did that Wilson was so lately in London, he certainly might have expected this. But he had lost sight of the curate after the death of his daughter: on his last inquiries at Putney, he had found that Wilson had sold his furniture, and left the cottage the day following Alithea's funeral. Sir Andrew had flattered himself that Wilson, in order to avoid him, had withdrawn into the country; but the truth was, that, after paying several debts contracted during the illness of his daughter, a very trifling sum was left to the curate; and with this he had retreated to an obscure lodging, where he was for many days confined by an illness brought on by anxiety and grief. The first morning, however, that he could leave his bed, he had ventured abroad, with the hope of reaching the residence of Dr. Hoadley, to whom he had resolved on making a full confession of his weak and culpable concealment of the wrong which had

so long since been committed by Sir Andrew. His strength was, nevertheless, by no means equal to his will; and he had proceeded but a short way, when he sank down in the fit which was the means of placing him under the humane care of Mr. Curzon.

But Sir Andrew—he might, indeed, as before observed, have held himself prepared for some such announcement as that which Dr. Hoadley now made; but, whether it was that his spirits were in a general state of depression, or that he was unnerved by the severity of the Bishop's manner, certain it is that he faltered, and turned pale, involuntarily grasping the back of the nearest chair for support. His customary audacity, however, briefly returned to his aid; and, assuming an independent, satisfied air, he said, "Ah, your Lordship, this is indeed excellent news: you, who have seen Wilson, know that there is really no certificate to produce; you have learned now what difficulties lie in the way of Sybil Mandeville—how impossible she will find it to prove that her mother was a wife."

"Yes, Sir Andrew Luntley," replied the Bishop, in a severe tone, "I have, indeed, learned so much—I have learned in its fullest extent the wrong which you have committed; I know how hard it will be for the orphan to regain her rights. But I have yet to learn," continued Hoadley, speaking with an emotion which was unusual to him, "what trait in my character, what action of my life could lead you, even in the extent of your effrontery, to suppose that I would back so gross a fraud."

Luntley had regained all his courage now: he felt that with the Bishop everything was lost, and the fury of his character broke forth: a truly diabolical sneer curled his lip. "Nay," he exclaimed, "if your Lordship will pronounce a sermon, I have done. But I thank you for one avowal; you, in the plenitude of your pious abhorrence of my deeds, admit that it will be hard for Sybil to make good her claim. Yes, let her now advance it, with Wilson to aid her romantic fabrications; there is the law, my good Lord Bishop, though you desert me—the gripping, grinding, dilatory law!"

"Lay not that unction to thy soul, thou bold, bad man!" exclaimed Blackburne, in a voice and with a gesture full of deep indignation; "the law will prove thy bane, and not thy resource."

"Why, what is this?" cried Luntley, sarcastically; "Archdeacon Blackburne pleading in a Papist's cause: is the moon at the full, and madness rioting in wise men's brains?"

"Wretched man," answered Blackburne, "this rage is useless—a longer denial of your guilt is vain; to Papist or to Pagan justice should be meted against thee."

While the Archdeacon spoke, that shivering with which he had been seized in his carriage again passed over the frame of Luntley, and his eyes wandered restlessly round the room; but the word "justice" caught his ear, and a frightful expression became visible in his face.

"Justice!" he exclaimed, clenching his hands, and speaking in a frantic tone—"I defy it! priest and layman, the living and the dead, the ghastly, frowning dead—I can defy them all! But, if you will believe the stories of the dreamer, Wilson, it is time I look for surer and for safer friends."

So saying, Sir Andrew rushed, as under the impulse of a sudden fit of madness, from the Bishop's house.

A painful silence prevailed between the two dignitaries for some minutes after his departure; then the Archdeacon observed, in an accent of self-reproach, "May Heaven forgive me, Hoadley; I fear that I erred wofully in my estimate of that man: I confess that, in my knowledge that his opponent was a Papist, I sought even in my own eyes to palliate or conceal his crimes: I was self-persuaded that his guilt had been less, and Wilson's more. I dreaded, too, that such deeds should be proved upon so prominent a partisan, and one who has indeed been so useful; and now they are revealed—what a stigma, what a reproach!"

"Blackburne, my friend," answered the Bishop, "it was such a catastrophe that I always feared; from the beginning I did not fail to doubt that man. Bold, active, and resolute, but

most reckless in his daring schemes—I knew him to be one who might wofully commit himself. Useful, indeed, he has been, very useful, but ever a keen and dangerous tool, most like to wound the hand that used it. Therefore have I held him at a distance since the hour when I first doubted him in this affair of the Mandevilles; for I felt that, were my suspicions correct, and he were guilty, so terrible an odium would fall on all with whom he might be in connexion, that it would be no less weak than wicked to appear as his defender. But, apart from this man's crimes, I do, indeed, agree with you in regretting that the rich estate of Rodenhurst should fall into the hand of a Papist. Wilson has told me, too, that this heiress is likely to become the wife of Lord Fitzwarine, who, as a Tory and a High Churchman, is more dangerous to our cause." After speaking thus, the Bishop paced the apartment with a disturbed air; then he said, "Yes, Blackburne, you can see it now—you can see how you were blinded by prejudice! That the name of this Luntley should be mixed up with that of any party in the Church—oh, it is indeed, as you have called it, a stigma, a reproach!—to stand confessed to the world as a common felon, to steal registers and estates: and would that this even were the worst."

"Alas! what worse can be?" said the Archdeacon.

"Ah, my friend," replied the Bishop, "great as is that sin, it is to be feared that yet a fouler deed will come to light! but it is true that, when a man has committed one act of enormous guilt, the world stands ready to accuse him of a thousand. I would fain hope yet that this unhappy Luntley is in some sort wronged."

* * * * *

On the same day which was so eventful to Sir Andrew, Dr. Croxall was lounging over a late breakfast at his lodgings in Pall Mall: for, curious as to the issue of the Baronet's proceedings against Sybil and her friends, the rector had come to London, with an intention of remaining there till it was ascertained. Croxall, while sipping his chocolate, was indulging in various speculations respecting the quarrel between Luntley and the

Draycots—not, it must be confessed, very much to the credit of the former. Suddenly he heard a loud, rapid step ascending the stair, the door was violently thrown open, and the Baronet himself appeared.

The noisy manner of his entrance was displeasing to Croxall, who failed, in consequence, to notice Luntley's extreme agitation—"Sir Andrew, my dear Sir Andrew," he said, "consider that other people may possess nerves, though you have none: you have made noise enough to awaken the Seven Sleepers."

"Croxall, Croxall!" cried Luntley, "I would speak to you on a matter of life and death."

"Life and death!" said Croxall, rising from the sofa on which he had again thrown himself, after saluting the Baronet—"life and death! oh, my dear fellow, life be enjoyed, and death be forgotten—it is a mouldy, disagreeable subject—but life!—look here, you rascal, look here; here are canonicals; take to such yourself, and make life merry while you can!" So saying, the rector took a mask and domino from the sofa, where they had been thrown on his return from a masquerade, and shook them facetiously before Sir Andrew.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the latter, who was in no mood for trifling—"I am serious, Dr. Croxall: the business upon which I would speak with you is of life and death importance."

"Death again!" answered the facetious Croxall; "it is a grave topic; we'll have none of it; and, for business, may the power of Momus defend me from it for ever, if it should make me as dismal as thou art;" and, placing the domino before his face, he continued, "Be persuaded, dear Sir Andrew; try these new canonicals of mine to-night——"

"Will you have done, Sir, with this foolery?" exclaimed the Baronet, fiercely stamping his foot; "I came here to seek a man of sense, and I find a mountebank, a buffoon!"

"Very agreeable, and exceedingly polite," remarked Croxall, throwing down the domino. "My good Sir Andrew, what is the matter?" he pursued.

"Croxall," replied Luntley, in a tone of mingled grief and

rage, "I am undone, defrauded, destroyed: give me your advice, Croxall!—fifteen, twenty thousand pounds for the man who can aid me to turn back upon their own heads the arts of these accursed Draycots."

"Ah!" exclaimed the rector, becoming suddenly even as serious as the Baronet himself, "I thought, my dear friend, you were quite sure of them; but some little accident has happened, I suppose, some flaw in your design—is it not so? heigh——"

"That villain, Wilson," gasped the Baronet. "And Hoadley believes him—takes his story, forsooth, upon his simple word."

"So, so, the curate has turned up, like the ace of trumps at the bottom of the pack," said Croxall; "truly, my dear Sir Andrew, this is an unpleasant matter for you."

"But, your advice, Croxall, your advice," cried the Baronet, eagerly.

"Why, really," answered the rector, "I do not know; I think, somehow, that penitence is not a part suited to your abilities; yet, on my life, I know not how you can choose another."

"This from you, Croxall!" cried the Baronet, in a tone of disappointment; "will you, too, tell me that you believe this tale?"

"Hark you, Sir Andrew Luntley," replied the rector, "we had better understand each other, and a few words will suffice for that. I do believe that you defrauded your niece, and I am not the man to assist you in such frauds. Go to, Sir Andrew—I have done with you; you would have hanged my poor friend, Lawson, if you could."

"Oh, oh, the hunted hare, the hunted hare!" cried Sir Andrew; then he added, in a fierce accent, "but you may be too quick; my destruction is not assured, Dr. Croxall, because you number yourself among my foes."

With these words, Sir Andrew quitted the room, in a style as impetuous as that of his entrance.

"A most pernicious rascal, that," muttered the rector; "and to have been upon terms with such a man! Well, I will have one more cup of chocolate, and then go and congratulate the pretty Sybil upon the downfall of her foe."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Oh, coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!—
The light burns blue. It is now dead midnight.
Cold, fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What do I fear? myself? there's none else by."

RICHARD III.

THE countless tongues of the London clocks but just told out the hour of eleven, when, with a cautious air, Sir Andrew Luntley led the idiot, silly Jemmy, down a back staircase of his house in Soho-square. It was a narrow staircase, illumined by a single lamp, placed on a bracket in the wall, and terminating in a square stone vestibule, the door of which communicated directly with the streets at the back of the house. There was a wild exultation in the idiot's manner, which he was evidently at some trouble to keep within due bounds—a kind of tripping movement, as he followed Sir Andrew down the stairs—a low chuckle of delight, which certainly betokened ill to some one.

The manner of the Baronet, if it had less excitement than that of Jemmy, exhibited at least an equal share of satisfaction, while his easy smile, the exceeding brightness of his deep grey eyes, were perhaps even more to be feared.

Sir Andrew paused in the little vestibule—"Now, Jemmy, my man," he said; "if you are but faithful to me this time, you have a fortune made."

"A fortune—ha, ha, ha!" cried the idiot, with such a laugh, that even Luntley shuddered, as it met his ears—"a fortune! a fortune! oh, do not fear my faith; oh, oh, good Sir Andrew; give me all those bright gold pieces that you showed me just now, and I will do—I will do all my father's work for a month to come! Besides, there is another reason why I should work for you; ah, ah—another reason, good Sir Andrew."

"And pray, Jemmy, what is that?" inquired the Baronet, whose present purpose was to humour this unfortunate being.

Hereupon Jemmy performed an extraordinary caper, and then crouched down at Sir Andrew's feet, while the light from the staircase, falling upon his face, gave a full effect to its horrible contortions. "Oh, oh, Sir Andrew!" cried Jemmy, laughing immoderately; "I will tell you—I will tell you why I should work for you; should not sons do their father's work, and am I not the son of the devil? Why, by that count I might be your son, Sir Andrew—your own son; for it is devil's work you have to do—it is devil's work. Ha, ha! perhaps, though, you were my father's elder brother, and you made him so clever—he surely has learned from you. I will help you, Sir Andrew—I will help you; oh, oh, I love the devil, and the devil's work; I hate everybody; I like cries, and groans, and tears: and, oh, I should like to hear you groan, Sir Andrew—oh, I should like that;" and, springing to his feet, Jemmy uttered an absolute scream of delight; then, turning a pirouette with the skill of an experienced dancer, he stood gazing at the Baronet with a sly, malicious air. "Well, well, Sir Andrew—poor Sir Andrew," he said, after the pause of about a minute, "I will do your work, never fear; for I hate him; oh, how I hate him! And you will give me the gold, too, Sir Andrew, the fine red gold."

"Yes, yes, Jemmy, you shall have the gold—all the gold I showed you, when you come and tell me that the work is done," said Luntley.

"And that shall be before the sun is up," answered Jemmy. "Oh, I hate him—I hate him; he does not beat me, but he calls me fool! fool! always fool; oh, who will look most like a fool to-morrow?"

"You show him, Jemmy, who is the greater fool," said Sir Andrew; then, opening the outer door, he bade the idiot begone, reminding him that there was no time to lose.

"No time to lose," said Jemmy, looking up at the sky, through which the bright summer moon was sailing—"no, no—no time to lose. It speaks again, the voice that summoned Wyatt—hark! hark! Sir Andrew; hark how loud it calls,"

continued the idiot, turning his goblin face upon the Baronet with an appalling look. "I will be with you—I will be with you again," he said, "before the sunrise; for, oh, Sir Andrew, in the coming day will be much work for you and I; prepare, Sir Andrew, then—prepare! prepare!" The idiot had bounded over the threshold, and, speeding along the street with his accustomed rapidity, was already out of sight; but still Sir Andrew Luntley stood at his own door, rooted, as it were, by an impulse of unaccountable and unutterable horror. The loud beating of his own heart alone broke the stillness of the night. His eyes were fixed on the pure, pale moon, which shone so calmly, so serenely above him. A dark cloud then seemed floating over its disk, and things strange and terrible were dimly shadowed in the midst. The chill hand of superstition had fastened upon Luntley's soul, but he wrenched himself from her sway; he who had never quailed, he would not be the fool of fancy now. By an effort, which perhaps no man save himself could have made, he shook off that growing weakness, and, closing the outer door, he softly ascended to his chamber. He paced to and fro, with a hurried step; his down bed, with its curtains of brocaded silk, in vain invited him to repose: he felt that he could not sleep that night. On the table were wax tapers, in massive silver candlesticks; wine, too, was there, and a glittering heap of gold, the gold with which he had tempted the idiot—to what? A crowd of frightful thoughts chased each other through Sir Andrew's brain; that audacity which had borne him up so bravely in the presence of Hoadley and Blackburne somewhat failed in the midnight solitude of his chamber. If the idiot succeeded in his mission, he would dare all yet; let him accomplish that one point, and the law's uncertainties would befriend him on all others; but *if*—and with that horrible word a host of more horrible contingencies, rushing on Sir Andrew's mind, drove him into a state little short of actual madness. He approached the table, and, filling a large goblet with wine, he drank it—another, and another. Under ordinary circumstances, that quantity of wine would have been sufficient

to intoxicate him—as it was, the liquor only bore him up under his fierce excitement. In a small chamber which opened from Luntley's bedroom was a rare Japan cabinet; he now took one of the candles, and commenced an examination of its contents. It was a tedious task, and the tapers had dimmed in the morning light long before Sir Andrew had completed it. There were the deeds by which the spendthrift heir had resigned the land which had for centuries belonged to his race; there were letters from despairing wretches whom Luntley had ruined, and who, out of the thousands of which he had robbed them, begged only for the means of purchasing a crust; there were letters from ministers of state, cringing to the wealthy political partisan, whose wealth and whose oratory were of equal use. Other papers, again, related to bubble companies, vile as that of the South Sea, on which Sir Andrew had first founded his fortune. All these heterogeneous documents he looked over and arranged, securing several of the most important about his person. But, when first he opened the cabinet, he took from it an ancient and curiously-wrought gold chain, and a dagger, the hilt of which was also of antique workmanship. A slight tremour passed over Luntley's frame, as he took these articles in his hands, but he quickly overcame it; and, after regarding the chain for a few moments, he concealed it, together with the dagger, in his bosom: a small box, containing some unset diamonds, and a purse, heavy with gold, he secured in like manner.

The bright summer sun had long streamed over the chamber, but, in his absorbing task, Sir Andrew had forgotten to extinguish the tapers: more than once, too, had he relinquished it, and paced the room with wild, disordered steps; and then wine, more wine, to drown that overwhelming terror, those agonizing fears. But he might as well have swallowed water, for all the effect which it had upon his system.

Luntley was still engaged at the cabinet, sealing the last parcel of papers, when he heard a chuckling laugh in the bed-chamber; and, turning his head, he beheld Silly Jemmy hastily cramming into his pockets the gold which lay upon the table,

and gibbering with a kind of mad delight. Confident from long experience in the faith of the idiot towards himself, Luntley had given him a pass key, to open the outer door, after he had executed the errand with which he had charged him.

"Ah, Jemmy!" cried the Baronet, rushing forwards, with an agitation equal to that of the idiot himself—"is it done, my man, is it done?"

"Done—oh, oh!" chuckled Jemmy, "oh, these wise men, how they are deceived by fools! done, Sir Andrew, sure it is done—if you had trusted a wise man, he had broken faith, but on the fool you may rely; did I not tell you that I hated him, Sir Andrew, that I hated him, and is not that enough?"

"Brave Jemmy, so far so good!" cried the Baronet; "but tell me, tell me all, Jemmy; I must know how 'twas done!"

By this time Jemmy had fairly cleared the table of the gold; and, turning towards Luntley with an evil scowl, he retreated with backward steps towards the door. "Oh, oh," he cried, pointing his finger mockingly at Luntley, "these wise men, how they are deceived by fools! yes, Sir Andrew, the fool speaks truth; it is done, for I hated—I hated him; and I hate you, too—I hate you!" screamed the idiot, all the malevolence of his nature breaking forth in his looks and tones—"I hate you; for you struck me—you struck me: but I shall see you hanged—you have spilt blood, Andrew Luntley, and the men of the law are coming to seize you—my father blows his fires hard and fast, and I shall see you hanged!"

Jemmy had set his back against the chamber door while he spoke, and astonishment and horror had hitherto transfixed Sir Luntley; but now he sprang forwards, and fiercely seized the idiot by the throat, intending to make his own way out of the chamber.

"No, no," gasped Jemmy, clinging to him with a fearful force—for he saw into his design—"you shall not go, Andrew Luntley; the officers will come,—I will hold you—I am strong!"

These words were spoken with difficulty, while the idiot in

his turn grasped Sir Andrew, who vainly strove to throw him off. They had struggled into the inner chamber—"You killed the pretty lady's father, and you will be hanged!" shouted Jemmy, with a hideous grin. The Baronet's hands were free; it was the idiot who clung to him with the tenacity of a wild cat: Sir Andrew vainly sought to disengage himself, and his countenance grew dark with rage and fear.

"The officers are coming!" cried Jemmy.

"Wretch!" exclaimed the Baronet, "for thine own sake, let me go!" but the hold was unrelaxed; and the hilt of the dagger, which he had forgotten, was pressed by the close embrace of his foe hard upon Luntley's breast.

The next moment it was sheathed in the bosom of the idiot!

The grasp was loosened; and, sinking on the ground, with a dying and horrible look, the wretched creature turned his eyes upon his murderer, and, exclaiming in a faint tone, "You are called, Andrew Luntley!—yet again!"—he expired, while a loud knocking at the hall door awakened an agony of fear in the Baronet's heart. Luntley had a frightful presence of mind in that emergency; he knew that his servants had not risen; he might escape by the back staircase before they could leave their beds to answer what he doubted not was the summons of the officers: a thought of self-gratulation for the preparations which he had made during the night flashed across his mind. He drew the dagger from the body of his victim, wiped and concealed it again in his bosom, locked the door of the inner chamber, where the corpse lay, and, taking his hat, darted for life or death towards the back staircase: but what was his anguish, when he reached its summit, to hear the steps and voices of persons below! They were a party of the officers, to one of whose number the idiot had made known that particular entrance to the house; the others still continued the noisy knocking at the hall door—escape that way was therefore equally impossible. Who shall describe the feelings with which that guilty and miserable man rushed back to his chamber! he locked and double-locked the door: his perceptions were awfully clear and acute through-

out that scene of horror : he heard one of the men say, " He is here—I caught a glimpse of him from the staircase."

Sir Andrew hurried to the inner room, where lay the body of the unfortunate idiot. He remained there for some minutes, while the officers endeavoured to force the outer door. At length it yielded to their united strength ; that of the closet was now shut, and Luntley was standing with a composed air in the centre of his bed chamber. " I shall offer no opposition, gentlemen," he said to the officers ; " I will go with you."

CHAPTER XXIX.

" Some undone widow sits upon mine arm,
And takes away the use of 't ! and my sword,
Glued to my scabbard with wronged orphan's tears,
Will not be drawn !
Ha ! what are these ? sure hangmen
That come to bind my hands, and then to drag me
Before the judgment seat !

Shall I then fall
Ingloriously, and yield ?—No, spite of fate,
I will be forced to hell like to myself !"

NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS.

AN unusual excitement prevailed at the Police Office in Bow-street, on the morning of Sir Andrew Luntley's apprehension. The exceeding malice of his proceedings against the friends of Sybil Mandeville had for some weeks past made the story of his dispute with her a topic of common conversation ; the number of those whom his peculations had injured were so many, that he had an evil character, and the tide of public opinion set strongly against him from the first. Within an hour after that event had taken place, his arrest was noised abroad, connected with innumerable reports, true or false, but all agreeing that he had been charged with the awful crime of murder. So dis-

tinguished was Sir Andrew for his political partisanship, his talents, his hardheartedness, his frauds, and his commercial success, that this announcement created a great sensation; and, eager to learn the result of his examination, long before he was brought up, a crowd of persons were assembled, not only in the court itself, but about the doors. The character of Luntley was so unhappily notorious, that the mob had determined his guilt, even without the ceremony of being acquainted with the charge laid against him; and, as the coach which conveyed the prisoner drew up before the office, its arrival was hailed with a general groan. The ebullitions of popular feeling, the honest indignation of the hardworking poor, Sir Andrew at all periods of his life had been ready to defy; but his colour changed, and his lip slightly quivered, when, on entering the office, he perceived that it was crowded with well-dressed persons. He knew of what elements that throng was composed—his political foes, maliciously anxious to witness his downfall; his political friends, eager in the hope that the fearful charge would be dismissed, or prepared to throw him off at once, and audaciously to brave the matter of their former connexion with him, by hurrying to be present at his disgrace: another, and the most considerable section of that assemblage, too, Sir Andrew knew to consist of those silly, meddling people who are most interested in what concerns them least.

An almost imperceptible smile crossed the lips of Luntley, as he was placed at the bar; by some of those who stood near to him this was imputed to a spirit of defiance, but it arose from pure wonder how so many persons should have gathered together in the short time that had elapsed since his arrest could have been made known—a trivial feeling, which it could be little supposed would have suggested itself at so trying a moment, if it were not a truth that the mind under the most distressing circumstances will attach itself with a kind of hallucination to such trifles, which at another time would pass unnoticed. On the whole, Luntley behaved with a firmness, and even dignity, which would have been honourable in a better man. There was

no vulgar bravado in the glance which he cast around the office, which, dark, dirty, and dismal, even on that bright summer day, threw a kind of shade over all assembled within its precincts. The stern control, however, which Luntley had placed over his feelings, somewhat failed him, as his eyes fell upon the magistrate; for he was one whom he had more than once met under far different circumstances, being no other than the celebrated novelist, Henry Fielding: foremost among those present, too, Sir Andrew observed the magistrate's brother John, who, blind from his youth, bore upon this occasion that eager, curious look in his face, which may be so frequently remarked in those who suffer under this affliction, and which contrasts so painfully with the dead, the sightless eyes. Most of the personages of our tale were assembled in the court: Sybil Mandeville and her friend, Lord Aumerle, Lord Fitzwarine, the elder Draycot, Mr. Curzon, Alice Morland, La Roche, and the curate Wilson, still feeble with sickness and grief. But among all those who were present surely there was no person more eminent than Hogarth, who, no less anxious for his young friend Sybil than to mark all the terrible workings of human passion, had secured a place where he could distinctly observe the countenances of the accusers and accused.

The first person examined was Sybil Mandeville.

We have before said that, even from her infancy, the daughter of the unfortunate Gerald had been haunted by dismal apprehensions with regard to Luntley; these apprehensions had been more than confirmed in her visit to Rodenhurst; and it had required all her own power of mind, all the exhortations of her friends, to nerve her for the awful task which lay before her, and of which she had now to commence the execution. The consciousness that in Luntley she now beheld the actual murderer of her father almost overcame her spirits; and it was with difficulty she was preserved from fainting when he was first brought into court. Thus it was that, as she stood before the magistrate in her ample dress of white lutestring, her dark eyes and hair contrasting strongly with her pale and agitated features, she might have seemed an incarnation of the ghostly pic-

ture in the secret chamber at Rodenhurst. By an involuntary motion almost she turned her head towards the prisoner, and for a moment their eyes met. Those of Fielding fell on the countenance of Sir Andrew; and it required not his wonderful penetration to detect a baleful secret in the Baronet's changing look; the spasmodic twitching of the muscles round the mouth; the distended eye, fastening for a moment on the pale face of Sybil, and then glancing hurriedly round the court, as though it followed some object invisible to all other ken. This emotion of Sir Andrew was as brief as it was remarkable; he suppressed the groan that struggled for utterance; and, folding his arms on his breast, cast down his eyes, and seemed to wait with a firmness which innocence might have shown to hear Sybil's deposition. A common ear could not have detected any sound; but John Fielding leaned curiously forward. With the acuteness of sense peculiar to the blind, he had heard Sir Andrew shiver.

The oath had been administered, and Sybil entered into the details of her visit to Rodenhurst. Ever and anon the eye of the magistrate glanced quickly but searchingly from her face to that of Luntley; and once Lord Fitzwarine perceived the pencil of Hogarth move quickly over the paper which he held—he was striking off the prisoner's countenance at the moment when the silver casket which Sybil had found in the ancient tomb was handed up for Fielding's inspection. So truthful and so fearful was this sketch, that, when it was afterwards shown to her, she could not contemplate it a second time.

That amazed, stupefied look of the wretched Luntley did not pass unnoticed by Fielding, whose excelling knowledge of human nature made him no less eminent as a magistrate than as a writer.

The voice of Sybil was faint and low; and more than once she had been compelled to taste the water which had been considerably brought for her. She had also been allowed a chair. But now, as she approached the end of her eventful tale—as she spoke of the chamber hung with black, of the fearful pictures, of the manuscript, and the coffin—she rose in her exceeding agi-

tation, and used a firmer and louder tone ; not one word, however of her deposition had been lost to any person in the court, so breathless was the stillness which prevailed. Alice Morland kept her eyes anxiously fixed upon her adopted child ; she observed her lips grow paler, her limbs tremble, and felt assured that the excitement which made her voice more clear and loud would ultimately bear her down.

"This casket, then, Miss Mandeville," said Fielding, opening it, "contains the authenticated copy of the certificate of your parents' marriage?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Sybil, in a fainter tone ; "the clergyman who performed the ceremony is here present, and will swear to the document ; and another person also, who will make oath that my father took that casket with him in his journey to Scotland. You will see that the casket contains a letter written by my father after his escape from the wreck ; but the manuscript, the manuscript tells all," pursued Sybil, as the magistrate unrolled the papers, which had been handed to him by an officer of the court.

"Who is the author of this terrible confession?" demanded Fielding, after hastily glancing over the first paragraph of the manuscript.

"Alice Morland knows the writing," answered Sybil ; "but the papers will themselves tell all. They tell that my father escaped from the wreck of the 'Dolphin ;' that his sister Deva urged her husband, this Luntley, to spill her brother's blood ; that remorse—ah, well it might—nigh drove her mad ; and that, after a life spent in frightful penance, she died but two years since."

An officer of the court stepped hastily forwards ; and the clerk, who was taking down her evidence, somewhat started, as Sybil, having thus spoken, sank down in a heavy swoon.

"Poor thing, I feared as much," remarked Fielding, as the young girl was borne out of the court, and committed to the care of Miss Draycot. He did not turn his head towards the wretched Luntley ; perhaps, like some other persons present, he felt grieved and mortified that one whom he had in some sort

known as a personal acquaintance should appear in so awful a position.

The next person summoned was Alice Morland, who testified that the casket was that which Gerald Mandeville had taken with him to Scotland, and also to the handwriting of the letter, which was couched in the most pathetic terms, and addressed to his sister, detailing the manner of his escape from the wreck, and the loss, with the vessel, of the money which he had journeyed to Scotland in order to receive; the letter concluded with an entreaty to Deva, that, as he was now wholly destitute, she would persuade his father to make him some small allowance: he should not write, he said, to Emma, till he had heard from her. This fatal assurance, it afterwards appeared, had suggested the murder. Alice also swore to Deva's writing in the manuscript. After Sybil's evidence, and the production of the silver casket, Sir Andrew had been prepared for everything; nor did he evince any emotion while Alice gave her testimony, or when the curate, Wilson, mingling many bitter self-reproaches with the tale, related how he had been defrauded of the original certificate.

La Roche then appeared against Sir Andrew, claiming to be admitted as evidence for the Crown. This man had been hitherto concealed from Sir Andrew's sight; but all the apathy of the latter vanished, when he saw La Roche step into the witness box; and rage, disappointment, and surprise, were equally depicted in his face. La Roche, on his part, levelled at his former master a look of deadly hate, and, turning towards the bench, tendered his oath with savage eagerness.

The manuscript of Deva was referred to frequently during the examination of this man.

It appeared that La Roche, formerly the valet of Gerald Mandeville, had openly quitted his service before the departure of the latter for Scotland; and that, long previous, he had been the secret agent of Deva, who owned in her confession that an unnatural hatred to her brother had been the ruling passion of her life. This hatred, it seemed, had its source both in her envy and ambition; overweening in her pride of birth, she had

first learned to detest Gerald because his mother had been a woman of family, while her own was born in humble life; haughty and luxurious, she panted for the possession of that rich inheritance which would fall to him as the male heir. Like her brother, she lost her maternal parent at an early age; and, though two years younger than Gerald, she soon obtained a dominion over her father, which was the origin of all her brother's misfortunes. Malignant, however, as had been Deva's conduct, it was not till after she became acquainted with Luntley that she obtained a power of working mischief which was equal to her will. It appeared, and was avowed in the disjointed ravings of her confession, that this man—handsome, insinuating, and with an evilness of nature which was like a magnet to her own—had inspired Deva with a passion which in its violence must have been almost insane. Never was there a stricter union, a stronger sympathy, than that which existed between her and Luntley; each was a slave to the other; but it was an odious bond, baleful alike in its cause and its effects; for it was, in truth, a similarity in their perverse and corrupt nature which bound them indissolubly to each other.

It was a few days only before his father's death, that the pathetic letter of the unfortunate Gerald had reached the Manor House. He had been saved by some fishermen from the wreck; and, dreading to face his wife, now that all present means of support seemed gone, he had made that last appeal to the heart of his sister. The frightful plot originated with the unnatural Deva. La Roche was dispatched with affectionate promises; and secretly, and at night, he brought the doomed Gerald to the Manor House. Deva, affecting to relent from all her former cruelty, persuaded her brother for a few days to take up his abode in the closed chambers of Rodenhurst, urging what appeared feasible, that she must soften his father to receive him, but the elder Mandeville even then lay dead. At this portion of his story La Roche protested, and the manuscript bore him out, that he had no idea that either Luntley or his wife had aimed at more than the perpetual imprisonment of Gerald, who was

indeed still alive at the time when Emma and Alice Morland visited the Manor House. It appeared that it was indeed the living Gerald whom the latter had seen in the mirror, and who, ignorant of the toils that were closing round him, had hastily shut the panel on hearing the foot of Alice in the little waiting room.

The chain which Alice Morland had seen Luntley so hastily concealing on that night was Gerald's, and the sight of it had awakened most fearful suspicions in the mind of Emma. This chain was now produced in the court, having been that morning taken from Sir Andrew by the officers, together with the dagger with which he had stabbed silly Jemmy.

La Roche paused when he had proceeded thus far in his statement; and a passage was read from the manuscript, by which it seemed that Sir Andrew, having persuaded La Roche that he meant to imprison his brother-in-law in an inner vault in the chapel of St. Etheldreda, obtained his assistance to convey him there; but that in that place the unfortunate Gerald had been murdered by Luntley, who afterwards, by dint of threats and bribes, prevailed upon La Roche to assist him in concealing the body in that stone coffin which Sybil had observed in the outer vault, and where La Roche solemnly protested that the remains would on a search be found.

A general buzz of astonishment and horror now stole through the court; but Luntley, apparently unaffected by the discovery of his crimes, seemed only to watch La Roche with a torturing anxiety, casting on him furtive but ferocious glances. La Roche was now more closely examined: the casket, with the copy of the certificate, it seemed, had fallen into the hands of Deva, who, suspicious even of her husband, with all her frenzied attachment to him, had concealed it; the original register, which Sir Andrew had stolen from Wilson, he had destroyed in the presence of La Roche. It seemed that Deva had afterwards concealed the casket in the tomb, from her confidence that neither La Roche nor Luntley would venture there.

"And how could *she* venture there?" exclaimed Fielding, in an accent of horror.

A kind of spasm of pain and fright made the pale features of La Roche more ghastly, while he replied, "She went there because it *was* so horrible; she spent whole nights in that dreadful tomb; but she said that night and day her brother stood beside her in his shroud, and made the Manor House as fearful as the tomb: it was part of her penance to pray beside his coffin, as it was to sleep in her own, and to paint those frightful pictures which Miss Mandeville has seen!"

"Poor wretched woman!" exclaimed Fielding; "one would have thought that such remorse would have led her into a public avowal of her guilt."

"The Lady Deva was too proud for that!" answered La Roche; "besides, she would not ruin Sir Andrew while she lived."

"And you, miserable man!" said the magistrate, "what could induce you to hide such iniquities so long?"

No language can describe the look of La Roche at this question—something more subtle than the serpent, something more malevolent than fancy can picture in a fiend, seemed dancing in his hollow eyes, and dwelling in his chuckling tones, as he replied—"I would not break faith with Sir Andrew while he used me well; but, after Deva's death, he took into closer confidence than myself one Camille Le Moine, the same whom he suborned to belie young Mr. Draycot, but who will be safe in France before to-morrow night: this man was useful to Sir Andrew in his politics, and better paid than his old and faithful servant. Fool that I was, to think that gratitude could exist in man; but I am revenged,—I have my triumph now!"

A strange kind of blackness had been gathering about the mouth and eyes of La Roche for some minutes, and his last words died away in a dismal wail, which accorded but little with their purport, and seemed indicative of intense corporal pain: he paused for a few moments, and an awful silence prevailed in the court, broken only by the voice of John Fielding, who exclaimed, in an eager tone—"Oh, that man—he is in some mortal pain!"

A fearful smile played upon the lips of Sir Andrew at these words, and he leaned forward, gazing at La Roche with starting eyes and parted lips. La Roche strove to speak again, but a few indistinct words broke from him, amid which the name of Deva only could be heard : he stood for near a minute, panting strongly, with fixed eyes, and the dark colour deepening on his face : then he broke into a horrible howl, and sank down, with foam bursting from his mouth.

The subdued air of Luntley was no more ; he sprang like a madman over the barrier which separated them, and, grasping the arm of La Roche with gigantic force, dragged him to his feet. " Oh, La Roche," he cried ; " devil, devil ! who triumphs now ? die not thus ; tell me you drank the wine the idiot was to offer ! "

The loud voice and fierce grasp of Sir Andrew seemed to recall the failing energies of his miserable foe ; he unclosed his eyes, and fixed them with an air of horror-stricken consciousness on the Baronet, and then, shrieking, " Poison, poison ! " in lamentable tones, was borne out of the court by the officers, by whom he had been separated from Sir Andrew.

At this moment one of the Baronet's servants made his way through the crowd, and desired to speak to Mr. Fielding. There was such a terror in this man's aspect, that it drew the attention of all present, save Hogarth, who marked a convulsion, awful as that which had agitated the features of La Roche, fast stealing over the Baronet's own face.

Meanwhile, the servant related, in accents full of alarm, that, forcing open the door of Sir Andrew's closet, he had there discovered the body of the idiot, silly James, whom he, with the officer left in charge of the house, feared that the Baronet had that morning murdered. While the man spoke, the convulsions of Sir Andrew had increased, and the officers found it necessary to support him ; but the words of the servant fell distinctly on his ear, and, gnashing his teeth, he exclaimed, furiously—" The fool stood between me and life, and I did kill him ; but I would fain have been spared that deed ; and the more so, that

the poor wretch has done me such good service in sending the vile La Roche first to meet that doom which well I know awaits us both."

These words were spoken with difficulty, and mixed with dreadful groans. The agitation in the court was frightful: Alice Morland fainted; cries of horror were heard on all sides; but a surgeon, who was present, declared it impossible to remove Sir Andrew, as he was then in the agonies of death by poison.

After a brief silence, he spoke again—"No gibbet, no gibbet!" he exclaimed, glaring wildly round him. "Hark! is that Wyatt calls?" then he shuddered fearfully; and, recognising the elder Draycot, who stood beside him, he said, "Be merciful, Harry Draycot, and drive away the idiot; see how he stands by your side, gibbering, and pointing to Gerald Mandeville!"

With a start of involuntary horror, the Squire moved.

But the scene grew too fearful to bear: the convulsions increased; the assistance of the surgeon was insufficient to relieve the wretched Baronet, whose cries became more dreadful, as the poison which he had taken tore his frame; his dying visions, too, were replete with horror; he raved distractedly of Gerald Mandeville, of the idiot, of starving children, and men whom his arts had driven unto death. Unable to support the scene, Mr. Draycot, Lord Aumerle, and Lord Fitzwarine endeavoured to make their way out of the court, which, however, was no easy matter in its crowded state. Thus, as they sought to force their way through the throng, their ears were pierced by the cries of the dying man, who fancied that his victims were at his side: but the awful drama was near its close—just as Mr. Draycot and his friends reached the door, arose a cry more wild, more melancholy, more heart-thrilling than all that had preceded it: a voice went forth amid those dismal sounds—"Ah, they are at my right hand! they are at my left! they are everywhere!"

The last words of the miserable Luntley.

CHAPTER XXX.

“ Though with less plate their sideboard shone,
Their conscience always was their own ;
They ne’er at levee meanly fawned,
Nor was their honour yearly pawned ;
Their hands, by no corruption stained,
The ministerial bribe disdained.
They served the crown with loyal zeal,
Yet jealous of the public weal ;
They stood the bulwark of our laws,
And wore at heart their country’s cause.”

GAY.

THREE months have passed away ; the green springtime and the pleasant summer have given place to autumn’s rich but varying tints ; the garner house is stored with yellow sheaves, and a bright moon lights up the dance of the merry harvest home.

Great changes have taken place : Sybil Mandeville is the Lady of Rodenhurst, and the wife of Lord Fitzwarine ; after the death of Sir Andrew Luntley, the law had speedily reinstated her in her rights. The ministers, too, were perhaps willing to stifle all recollection of the attachment which that unhappy man had testified towards their party, and to hush up the memory of his guilt by rendering full justice to all against whom he had plotted. Thus, the Benedictine, Lawson, poor Farmer Ashley, and young Draycot, were forthwith released from prison : it is scarcely necessary to say that the absconding of Le Moine, and the discovery of his bad character, left the government, indeed, without any plea for restraining the liberty of the young Squire.

It is, perhaps, still more superfluous to remark, that Harry Draycot became the husband of Lady Anne on the same day that her brother was united to Sybil Mandeville.

The future fortunes of the persons of our tale might, perhaps, suggest themselves ; but a few more "last words."

The true-hearted Alice Morland, of course she remained with the child of her adoption ; as for Lady Anne, she was settled at Draycot, to be happy with the gentle Mildred, for the politics of our friends kept them much away from the Capital. By a singular chance, the living of Rodenhurst, through the death of the incumbent, fell into Lord Fitzwarine's gift, only a week after his marriage ; and by his own inclination, and the request of Sybil, he bestowed it upon the unfortunate Wilson, who, rejoicing to return to those sacred duties which could alone solace him under his bereavements, hastened forthwith to Rodenhurst in company with Father Lawson. Both clergymen were fully occupied during the remainder of the summer ; the silent chambers of the Manor were thrown open, and the house and grounds decorated for the arrival of their young mistress ; the old swans grew tame again, the grass disappeared from the gravel walks, and the pleasure boat was repainted.

A more solemn duty fell to the share of Mr. Lawson : it was to superintend the removal of the remains of Gerald Mandeville from the old stone coffin in which they had been concealed by his murderer. The chapel of St. Etheldreda was re-edified ; the pointed arches and splintered pinnacles were restored to their ancient beauty ; the windows were filled with stained glass, vying in richness of colour with that which had filled them of old. The broken altar was raised up, and the tomb of Sir Aymer repaired. The bright sunbeam, streaming through the many-pictured window behind the altar, threw variegated tints upon the monument of the stout old warrior, and glimmered with a fainter hue over another tomb. The genius of the ancient time might have been employed to raise that sepulchre, so finely finished were its mosaics, so touching and so mournful the forms of the lady and the youth reposing there, "with hands clasped fast, as if still they prayed," and the kneeling figures of the mourning females at its foot.

In that tomb the ashes of the unfortunate Emma—for which, at the time of her death, the tender care of Alice had amid all

her poverty procured a leaden coffin—were deposited beside those of her husband.

Lord Fitzwarine, with his father, the Earl, Mr. Draycot, Mr. Curzon, and his other friends, attended the interment; and still through succeeding years was the young lady of the Manor seen daily proceeding to the chapel with her friends, Lawson and Alice; and ever, after the Benedictine had privately celebrated at the altar the still proscribed rites of the ancient faith, did Sybil kneel and pray beside her parents' tomb.

The coffin of the unhappy Deva, which had remained so long unburied, owing to the secret of the real period of her death resting only with Luntley and La Roche, was removed to the family vault of the Mandevilles.

After the death of Luntley it was found that his reverses had been such, that little remained to him save the property of which he had defrauded Sybil. His gorgeous house at Draycot was pulled down; and the happy peasants soon learned, under the kindly support of Mr. Draycot, to remember their past wrongs with a less bitter feeling. But, to return to the harvest home—the like of which Rodenhurst had not known for many years—who shall describe what full laps the gleaners carried from the field, what high-heaped boards there were in the farm kitchens, what barrels of ale and abundance of roast beef in the hall of the Manor House? And, more than all, who can speak the delight of Sybil, as she hastened from cottage to cottage, and found that three little months had changed the scene so much? Perhaps her satisfaction was most at its height when she learned from Mr. Wilson that the Rev. Jabez Ringletub had offered to sell Bethesda Chapel, which might, he said, be converted into a schoolroom for the village children; but that, for his own part, he had not found the “seed of grace” thrive lately at Rodenhurst, and should forthwith quit that benighted village.

It is needless to say that the proposals of Mr. Ringletub were accepted.

But clouds will come over the fairest sky—human existence is dark with sorrow at the best; and Sybil and her friends felt real grief at the early death of the amiable Prince of Wales.

It may suffice to show in what estimation Prince Frederick was held in contradistinction to the Duke of Cumberland, when we state the fact, that when his death was announced, and sung in ballads through the streets, crowds of people followed the singers with the cry, "Oh, that it was but his brother! oh, that it was the Butcher!"

As to the Duke of Cumberland, who really possessed no one qualification for a military man save that of corporal courage, the disgraceful treaty of Kloster Seven caused his claims to distinction as a commander to be so well understood, that he was compelled to surrender all the offices he held, and fell into a neglect and contempt with the public which continued till the period of his death.

But, to return—it was at Rodenhurst that Lord Fitzwarine worked out those political and religious principles which Lord Aumerle had already found productive of so much substantial happiness on his own estates. Holding their great wealth, their elevated rank, as sacred trusts, which made them responsible for the happiness and conduct of the meanest cottager on their land, Lord and Lady Fitzwarine soon discovered that the cry of ingratitude so commonly raised against the poor is no less false than it is cruel.

But such was not the lot of the villagers of Rodenhurst: their bodies were not pinched by want, nor their minds distracted by the ravings of sectarian zeal. Under the influence of Lord Fitzwarine, the Church was there left in her true position—consoling, supporting, assisting, evincing on all occasions her most benign quality, a sublime and holy sympathy with those who suffer.

Yet another word for that faction so often alluded to in the course of this volume.

Not one kindly or generous feeling can amalgamate with the real principles of Whiggery: it seeks everything for itself—nothing beyond itself. We may admire and respect the devotion of the chivalric Cavalier who would write *aimez-loyauté* on every window in his house; he would sacrifice everything for his *King*—he looked beyond *himself*. We must venerate, on the other hand, the enthusiasm of the stern Republican, with his

splendid but perhaps fallacious visions of Greece and Rome : they are based upon his belief in the "perfectibility" of human nature—he would sacrifice *himself* to promote the dignity of his race.

It is no slander to assert that the Whig has no visions save for *himself*. Hear an oracle of the party, the veritable Nicholas Gimcrack—the aged, scandal-loving fop, Horace Walpole—who, had he but mounted a mob cap, might have passed for an old woman, as well as his friend, the Marquise du Deffand :—

"It would be even in vain," writes Walpole, "to say that the plague is here. I remember such a report in London when I was a child ; and my uncle, Lord Townsend, then Secretary of State, was forced to send guards to keep off the crowd from the house in which the plague was said to be—they would go to *see* the plague. Had I been the master of the house, I should have said, as I would to kings who pretend to cure the Evil, "*You cure the Evil ! you are the Evil ! you see the plague ! you are the plague !*"

It may be thought that Dame Horace, in this pithy sentence, exhibits more malice than is becoming in an old lady, but it cannot be denied that it admirably condenses the spirit of the Whig faction.

Be it remembered then ! O kings, you are the *Evil* ! O people, you are the *pestilence* ! the *plague* ! "Lay it to thine heart, and farewell !"

For ourselves, we would fain hope that a light is coming over the great darkness, that the voice of the long-suffering has been heard at last, and that throughout the broad lands and fertile fields of once *Merrie Englande* will be such a joyful change as that which Lord Fitzwarine and his young bride so soon wrought at Rodenhurst.

THE END.

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